

Hafa Adai!

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Saipan Tribune



Ex-CPA legal counsel Hallahan joining House legal team. PAGE 2
FHB sues local car wash joint over fraudulent claims. PAGE 2

CHRISTMAS JAMS

Spreading the Christmas spirit, Eucon Christmas Carolers filled the Hyatt Regency Saipan in Garapan with Christmas songs last Thursday evening. The mini concert came complete with violinists.

CHRYSTAL MARINO

'Police officers are out there'

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
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REPORTER

Despite a recent uptick in break-ins at popular tourist sites, the Department of Public Safety remains vigilant in its efforts to keep the community safe by deploying more officers around these sites, according to DPS Commissioner Clement Bermudes last week.

See **POLICE** on Page 4

House panel investigating BOOST Program to discuss subpoena for local news media

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Rep. Ralph N. Yumul (Ind-Saipan), who chairs the House of Representative committee

that is looking into the previous administration's Building Optimism, Opportunity, and Stability Together grant program, has called for a meeting

See **HOUSE** on Page 4



Bermudes



A woman with her children walk after church Christmas service in Kryvorivnia village, Ukraine, Sunday, Dec. 24, 2023.

AP

By DAVID McHUGH, ABDUL RAHMAN SHAHEEN and SHAZIA BHATTI
Associated Press

FRANKFURT, Germany (AP)—Christians around the world were striving on Christmas Eve to put aside the

See **CHRISTIANS** on Page 4

Kilili says getting tourism industry up is key to CNMI's economic recovery

Kilili meets with HANMI, Saipan Chamber of Commerce on EVS-TAP

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

Getting the CNMI tourism industry back up and running after the devastation of the COVID-19

pandemic and repeated super typhoons that hit the CNMI is key to the revival of the Marianas' economy, according to

See **KILILI** on Page 4



Sablan

INSIDE



BUSINESS

P.H.R. Ken Micronesia, Inc. announced the promotion of two of its longstanding Guam executives beginning on Jan. 1, 2024.

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WORLD

At least 68 people were killed by an Israeli strike in central Gaza, health officials said.

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LIFE & STYLE

"Aquaman and the Lost Kingdom" led a crowd of new releases at the box office on the weekend before Christmas Monday.

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Local

Ex-CPA legal counsel Hallahan joining House legal team

By **FERDIE DE LA TORRE**
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REPORTER

Former Commonwealth Ports Authority legal counsel Joseph Hallahan is joining the House of Representatives legal team in January 2024.

This developed as House legal counsel John Bradley decided he no longer wants to work full-time as House

legal counsel.

Legislative Bureau director Perry John P. Tenorio informed Senate President Edith E. De-Leon Guerrero (D-Saipan) and House Speaker Edmund S. Villagomez (Ind-Saipan) last week that Bradley will be appointed as a part-time lawyer for the bureau. His role will be to offer legal advice and support to Tenorio, contribute to

administrative functions, and concentrate on long-term legislative projects.

Tenorio said Bradley will report directly to him, delivering outcomes in the form of updated office policies, standardized contracts, drafting manual, forms, and proposed legislation.

By centralizing these legal responsibilities within a sin-

gle position, Tenorio said he can enhance consistent administrative oversight and streamline the overall processing of legislative matters.

Tenorio said Bradley had sought to become a part-time House legal counsel since October 2023, but they declined his request



Hallahan

in order to search for his replacement. That's when they offered the position to Hallahan, as Bradley's replacement. Tenorio said Hallahan, who was vetted by Bradley and the

House's other lawyer, Joseph Tajeron, accepted the offer.

Hallahan will begin reporting for work on Jan. 15, 2024.

In citing the need to ap-

point Bradley as a part-time legal counsel, Tenorio believes that certain long-term legislative projects have been relegated to the backburner for various reasons and this change will give Bradley more time to focus on these projects.

"One of the most critical factors, in my opinion, is the absence of a dedicated attorney to support and offer guidance to the LB director," Tenorio said.

Attention CNMI Government Employees, Retirees and Surviving Spouses

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Open enrollment runs Wednesday, November 29 - Thursday, December 28

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Websites to help you choose a plan:

- Aetna International: www.AetnaInternational.com/cnmi-ghli
- CNMI Dept of Finance: <https://finance.gov.mp/forms.php>

Have questions? Call us:

- For Open Enrollment inquiries, contact Pacifica locally at: **670-234-6267** Monday — Friday, 8 AM-5 PM
- For non-OE related inquiries, contact our Member Service Center 24/7 at: **800-231-7729**

Open enrollment runs from November 29 through December 28, 2023.

AetnaInternational.com

1377557-01-02 (11/23)



FHB faults car wash joint for allegedly fraudulent claims

By **KIMBERLY B. ESMORES**
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

First Hawaiian Bank has filed a civil lawsuit against Tianchi Corp., doing business as Jiu-zhou Car Wash, over allegedly fraudulent claims made by the establishment's customers, resulting in a bank's loss of over \$95,000.

FHB filed a breach of contract lawsuit last week against Tianchi Corp. and its operator, Hong Yong Fu, in the U.S. District Court for the NMI.

As relief, FHB is seeking judgment of \$95,879.01, plus interest, costs of collection and attorneys' fees.

According to the lawsuit, on or about Oct. 22, 2021, Tianchi submitted to FHB a merchant processing agreement application requesting that FHB provide merchant services, including the provision of a credit/debit card terminal for use by Tianchi at its car wash business on Saipan, Jiu-zhou Car Wash.

Once approved, the intent of the application was that Tianchi could swipe customers' credit/debit cards or insert credit/debit cards into the merchant terminal in order to charge the customers' credit/debit card accounts for services provided or goods sold to the customers by Tianchi. FHB would then collect those charges from the issuer of the customer credit/debit cards. This created the merchant agreement between FHB and Tianchi.

Hong, the operator, guaranteed the obligations and performance of Tianchi under the agreement.

Pursuant to the agreement, FHB installed a merchant terminal at Tianchi's business premises and Tianchi started utilizing the terminal to process customer's credit cards

and debit card transactions.

Starting around February 2023, FHB claims the number and amount of transactions processed through Tianchi's merchant terminal increased. In addition, FHB began receiving notices of dispute initiated by the issuers of the credit/debit cards used by their cardholders at Tianchi's place of business using Tianchi's merchant terminal.

The notices of disputes alleged that the transactions were fraudulent and that the credit/debit cards in question were not or could not have been presented to Tianchi for services rendered or sales made by Tianchi to the cardholders.

To date, FHB says it has received notices of disputes in the aggregate amount of \$117,549.04.

FHB said it has been able to recover certain of those funds but \$95,879.01 remains outstanding.

As a consequence, FHB has been required to reverse the fraudulent transactions and reimburse the issuers of the credit/debit cards used in the fraudulent transactions.

FHB demanded that Tianchi and Hong, who guaranteed the obligations of Tianchi under the agreement, pay FHB the full amount of its losses resulting from the fraudulent transactions. Tianchi has allegedly failed and refused to do so.

"As a consequence, Tianchi is in breach of the agreement, Hong is in breach of his guaranty and FHB is entitled to an award of damages against Tianchi and Hong jointly and severally in the principal amount of \$95,879.01, plus attorneys' fees and costs in pursuing this action as provided for in the agreement," said FHB.



MAN'AMKO CAROLERS
Carolers from the Saipan Man'amko Center recently visited the Office of the Governor, where they sang Christmas carols to spread joy and holiday spirit. Audience members included Gov. Arnold I. Palacios, Department of Lands and Natural Resources Secretary Sylvan Igisomar, Office of Management & Budget special assistant Virginia Villagomez, and staff members from the Office of the Governor, the Attorney General's Office, and OMB. The carolers were accompanied by Walter Manglona, director for the Office of Aging.

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Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

CUC offices closed Dec. 25 and 26

In observance of Christmas Day, Commonwealth Utilities Corp. offices will be closed on Monday, Dec. 25, and Tues-

day, Dec. 26, 2023.

Customer Service Centers, however, will resume normal business hours from 7:30am to 5pm on Tuesday, Dec. 26,

2023, to accommodate CUC customers.

For more information, contact CUC's hotline at (670) 236-4333 or visit its website

and Facebook page for the latest updates.

For emergencies, please contact Customer Service at (670) 664-4282. **(CUC)**

CHRISTIANS

From page 1

worries and fears of an unsettled, war-torn world as they prepared to celebrate the birth of Jesus of Nazareth.

Before leading Sunday Mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City, Cardinal Timothy Dolan reminded congregants to keep war-torn parts of the Middle East in their Christmas prayers.

"As we anticipate Christmas, our hearts always go to the holy land," he said, referring to parts of Israel and the Palestinian territories. "The holy land is under a cloud, the holy land is suffering, the holy land is filled with violence and hatred and retribution. And this dulls and threatens to suffocate the joy of Christmas."

Believers in Syria gathered in a country still suffering from the aftermath of a long civil war and suffocating economic blockade. Despite festive lights and Christmas decorations adorning houses and shopfronts in the capital Damascus, events in Gaza and ongoing battles in parts of the country have left the holiday atmosphere subdued.

In Yabroud, a city north of Damascus, worshippers gathered in the St. Constantine and Helen Cathedral to enjoy Christmas carols sung by the Joy Choir from Damascus. "Everyone should try, with what the Lord has given them, to spread joy in order to help end this sorrow," said Fadi Homs, a member of the choir.

Prosperous, mostly secular Europe marked the holiday in historic cathedrals and brightly lit holiday markets, with an undertone of tension spread by the war in Gaza and by one even closer to home in neighboring Ukraine. Wages that haven't yet caught up with inflation dampened the mood during the pre-holiday shopping and dining season.

Sightseeing-only visits were barred at Germany's landmark cathedral in Cologne and Christmas Eve worshippers faced security checks to get into midnight Mass there Sunday as police responded to indications of a potential attack. Still, officials urged people not to shy away from holiday celebrations out of fear.

Auxiliary Bishop Rolf Steinhäuser greeted people attending services with a relaxed smile and an expression of thanks for police security

efforts, a day after police descended on the cathedral and searched it with sniffer dogs. With several dozen officers on duty outside, he said it was "probably the most secure church service in all of Germany."

In Austria, police said they also were stepping up security around Vienna's churches and Christmas markets, apparently responding to the same intelligence about a potential threat. They did not give further information, but the dpa news agency reported without citing a source that the threat was from an Islamic extremist group.

Cologne's towering cathedral, whose twin spires rise 157 meters (515 feet) high, is a major tourist destination visited by some 6 million people a year. It is home to the Shrine of the Three Kings, a gold- and silver-decorated casket said to contain the relics of the wise men described in the New Testament as paying homage to the newborn Jesus.

The European Union's home affairs commissioner, Ylva Johansson, warned Dec. 5 that Europe faces a "huge risk of terrorist attacks" over the Christmas holidays due to fallout from the war between

Israel and the Palestinian militant group Hamas. Johansson provided no details about any police or security information that might have led to her warning.

Ukraine is preparing to officially mark Christmas as a state holiday on Dec. 25 for the first time after moving the date in line with countries in Western Europe. President Volodymyr Zelenskyy signed legislation in July moving the holiday to Dec. 25 from Jan. 7, when it is observed by the Russian Orthodox Church and also by one of Ukraine's two competing Orthodox churches. Some Eastern Orthodox churches continue to use the ancient Julian calendar, under which Christmas falls 13 days later.

A note attached to the law said its goal was to "abandon Russian heritage" and cited "the desire of all Ukrainians to live their lives with their own traditions, holidays."

"The nights before Christmas are the longest of the year. However, the day has already begun to lengthen and the light has begun to prevail. The light grows stronger. Darkness will eventually lose. Evil will be defeated," Zelenskyy said in a video address Sunday.

HOUSE

From page 1

this Thursday to decide on how to move forward with their investigation, including talks about possibly calling in the local media.

Yumul told *Saipan Tribune* yesterday that the meeting of the Special Committee on

Federal Assistance & Disaster-Related Funding is more procedural since everyone has responded through their attorneys. Included in the meeting's agenda under new business are subpoenas for the newspapers *Marianas Variety* and *Saipan Tribune*, and radio station KKMP.

The BOOST Program bought promotional spac-

es and placed ads on local newspapers and the radio station.

The committee is also expected to discuss during the meeting an update on documents requested from Saipan World Resort's response letter and other communication documents.

Yumul earlier stated that the committee's hearing may

resume in 2024 after three contractors asked for a 30-day extension in order to produce the documents the committee had subpoenaed.

The BOOST Program used \$17 million in American Rescue Plan Act funds that, according to some House members, were handed out to many of the previous administration's cronies.

POLICE

From page 1

He said in an interview that more officers have been deployed in the streets of Saipan as well as up north near popular tourist sites during the holiday season after an uptick in burglaries were reported.

"Police officers are out there. We're spreading our officers, increasing their visibility during the holidays. It's the holiday season and unfortunately some people are just taking advantage. [Criminals] are very opportunistic. They look for the right time and the right place," he said.

With DPS ratcheting up efforts to deter burglaries, Bermudes encourages tour guides

to do their part, like informing tourists to keep their valuables safe by making sure they're not in plain view.

"We can reduce [crime] by removing valuables from easy view. Even at the beach, have somebody stay back. It may be asking too much, but that's the best security that we can have. If something happens, call DPS," Bermudes said.

Marianas Visitors Authority managing director Chris Concepcion earlier said there has been an increase in the number of burglaries victimizing tourists in popular tour sites and dive sites.

"We've received reports directly from visitors and tour operators about the increase in crimes, including a convertible whose top was ripped

open and had items stolen, car windows being smashed at tourist sites, and passports and credit cards found in trash bins in Marpi," he said.

This, he said, could damage the CNMI's reputation as a destination.

"We pride ourselves on being a safe destination, and for the most part we are indeed a very safe destination, with low crime rates relative to the size of our population. But every time a crime is committed against a tourist, the problem is amplified because their experience is shared with friends and family overseas, and oftentimes posted on social media, which does immense damage to our reputation as a secure place to visit," he said.

MVA is calling on DPS and

the community to help deter crimes against tourists.

"We respectfully request that our law enforcement partners beef up patrols in Marpi, the Laolao dive site, Obyan, and Ladder beaches, and other areas frequented by tourists. This will deter would-be criminals from committing more crimes. We also ask the community to be vigilant. Report crimes or suspicious activity and look out for our visitors who are here to enjoy our gorgeous islands. Our law enforcement officers cannot do this alone. The tourism industry is what fuels our economy, so we all must do our part to make our communities safe and attractive. Tourism is everybody's business," he said.

Joshua Okaruru is missing



Okaruru

The Department of Public Safety is seeking the community's help in finding Joshua Okaruru of Chinatown.

The 28-year-old is described as a local male standing 5'9" tall and weighing about 170 lbs. He has brown hair and has brown eyes.

He was last seen walking northbound by Fishing Base, Garapan on Dec. 19 at about 2pm. He was wearing red pants, a gray shirt, and black shoes and holding a black and blue backpack.

If you have any information on the whereabouts of Okaruru, call the DPS Criminal Investigations Bureau at 664-9042 or call "911" immediately. **(DPS)**

KILILI

From page 1

Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan (D-MP) over the weekend.

Sablan disclosed in his e-kilili newsletter that members of the Hotel Association of the NMI and their partners at the Saipan Chamber of Commerce briefed him at his office on Saipan last Tuesday on their progress toward that goal.

Sablan said he brought them up to date on Republican efforts in the U.S. Congress to kill the discretionary parole program that has allowed Chinese tourists to enter the Marianas without a tourist visa.

Some members of the U.S. Congress wrote U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas last Nov. 30 to ask DHS to revoke the discretionary parole program. Four U.S. senators and 28 U.S. House members signed the letter.

The U.S. lawmakers expressed concern that the policy "made the islands vulnerable to a plethora of problems, including drug trafficking, illegal immigration, and organized crime" and urged that visitors from China be required to obtain first a B-1 or B-2 visa in China that would allow them to enter the Marianas.

Sablan also shared with HANMI and Chamber officials his recent letter to Mayorkas supporting using the Guam-CNMI Visa Waiver Program as a more secure alternative for that purpose.

Sablan urged Mayorkas in his letter to move forward on the rule-making process for the CNMI Economic Vitality & Se-

curity Travel Authorization Program for Chinese tourists.

Sablan said the CNMI EVS-TAP could further the Commonwealth's goal to work with him and DHS to ensure the integrity of U.S. borders—no matter where tourists or other arrivals to the islands come from.

The proposed EVS-TAP will allow pre-screened People's Republic of China nationals to travel to the CNMI without a visa under specific conditions.

The EVS-TAP was one of the recommendations of the 902 Consultation special representatives of then-President Donald Trump and then-CNMI governor Ralph DLG. Torres on May 15, 2019, as a subprogram of the Guam-CNMI Visa Waiver Program.

HANMI and the Chamber recently urged CNMI government leaders to back the proposed EVS-TAP, as this, according to the groups, will address concerns about the discretionary parole program. The Marianas Visitors Authority and the Commonwealth Ports Authority have underscored the need to get back the Chinese tourists to revitalize CNMI's tourism/economy.

Last week, the CNMI Senate adopted a joint resolution authored by Sen. Jude U. Hofschneider (R-Tinian) to request Gov. Arnold I. Palacios to advocate for the promulgation of the EVS-TAP for Chinese tourists.

The CNMI House of Representatives is expected to discuss the Senate joint resolution during their session tomorrow, Wednesday.

Quaker, other granola products recalled

The Commonwealth Healthcare Corp., with guidance from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, has inspected stores on Saipan for variety of Granola Bars and Granola Cereals, which have been voluntarily recalled by The Quaker Oats Company based on an ongoing FDA investigation.

The granola bars and cereals in question have the potential to be contaminated with Salmonella. The CHCC has identified affected inventory on island and the vendor has been advised to discard these products and to inform customers to do the same.

The CHCC is urging food establishments and community members not to consume the affected Quaker brand granola bars and cereal. CHCC advises the community to seek medical attention for any foodborne related illness.

EARTHQUAKE BRIEFS

4.9-magnitude earthquake in San Jose

At 7:37pm on Dec. 22 2023, a 4.9-magnitude earthquake occurred near San Jose Village, Northern Mariana Islands. Currently, there are no tsunami warnings or advisories that were issued by the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center.

For more information, please contact the CNMI EOC State Warning Point at (670) 237-8000. *(PR)*

5.7-magnitude earthquake in Pagan

At 12:11am on Dec. 11, 2023, a report of a 5.7-magnitude earthquake occurred in the Pagan region, NMI. Currently, there are no tsunami warnings or advisories that were issued by the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center.

For more information, please contact the CNMI EOC State Warning Point at (670) 237-8000. *(PR)*

5.0-magnitude quake in Maug

At 4:34pm on Nov. 27, 2023, a report of a 5.0-magnitude earthquake occurred in the Maug Islands region, Northern Mariana Islands. Currently, there are no reports of injuries or damages and no tsunami warnings or advisories were issued by the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center.

For more information, contact the CNMI EOC State Warning Point at 237-8000. *(PR)*

Salmonella is an organism which can cause serious and sometimes fatal infections in young children, frail or elderly people, and others with weakened immune systems. Healthy people may experience fever, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea (which may be bloody), and abdominal pain. In rare cases the organism can get into the bloodstream and produce more severe illnesses such as arterial infections (i.e., infected aneurysms), endocarditis and arthritis.

CHCC thanks all our wholesale and food distributors for their continued partnership and cooperation in keeping our community healthy and safe.

RECALLED GRANOLA BARS		
Product Description	UPC Codes	Representative Image
QUAKER CHEWY DIPS	30000312698	
QUAKER CHEWY CHOCOLATE CHIP	30000313820	
QUAKER CHEWY VARIETY PACK	30000313882	
QUAKER CHEWY PEANUT BUTTER	30000313844	
QUAKER CHEWY VARIETY PACK	30000451304	
QUAKER CHEWY DARK CHOCOLATE	30000313865	
QUAKER CHOCOLATE CHIP COOKIE DOUGH	30000576519	

CHCC
The list of Granola Bars and Granola Cereals voluntarily recalled by The Quaker Oats Company based on an ongoing U.S. Food and Drug Administration investigation.

The community could visit the FDA Recall Announcement for more information on the Quaker Brand at: <https://www.fda.gov/safety/recalls-market-withdrawals-safety-alerts/quaker-recalls-granola-bars-and-granola-cereals-due-possible-health-risk>

For more information about the CHCC Environmental Health and Disease Prevention unit, call 670-236-2022/27/28 or email the director of EHDP, John Tagabuel, at john.tagabuel@chcc.health.

For more information about CHCC programs, follow us on Facebook and Twitter at @cnmichcc, check out our website at www.chcc.health or call us at (670) 234-8950. *(CHCC)*

COMMONWEALTH UTILITIES CORPORATION
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

INVITATION FOR BIDS
CUC-IFB-24-003

Carolina Heights Waterline Replacement

The Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) is soliciting competitive sealed bids from qualified firms for the Carolina Heights Waterline Replacement in Tinian, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. The project consists of the installation of a waterline main, service laterals, connection to the existing waterline main, and the installation of fire hydrants.

The project is funded by a grant from the US Department of Interior/Office of Insular Affairs (US DOI/OIA) and CUC. The award of this project is contingent upon receipt of approval for project award from US DOI/OIA.

CUC requires the project to be completed in **210 calendar days** from the date of award of the contract.

Prospective Bidders for this IFB must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply Division. The IFB package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of \$200.00 for one IFB package set.

A Pre-Bid Conference will be held on **December 12, 2023 at 10:00 AM (ChST)** at the CUC Main Conference Room, 3rd Floor, Room No. 17, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building.

One (1) original and Five (5) copies of the bid MUST be submitted in a sealed envelope marked **“CUC-IFB-24-003, Carolina Heights Waterline Replacement”** to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on December 27, 2023**, at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. Bids mailed via postal or courier service must be received on or before the due date and time or post-marked before the due date and time. Bid shall be submitted on the provided Bid Forms. Bidders are required to complete all Bid Forms. Bidders may supplement this form as appropriate. Bids will be required to be submitted under a condition of irrevocability for a period of 60 days after submission. **Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered.**

A Bid Guarantee of **fifteen percent (15%)** of the total bid price must accompany the bids. The bid guarantee may be in cash, certified check, cashier's check, or bid bond executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety.

A **Payment Bond** of one hundred (100%) percent and a **Performance Bond** of one hundred (100%) percent of the total bid price will be required upon the execution of the contract by the successful bidders. The Payment and Performance bond must be executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety. Surety Company must be authorized to do business in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

All insurers' questions, concerns and qualification shall be handled by the Department of Commerce Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC). The OIC is tasked with regulating and monitoring compliance to the CNMI's Insurance Code (Title 4, Division 7). *Bidders are required to submit clearance from the OIC certifying their insurer of choice is in compliance with the CNMI's Insurance Code.*

All bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid under the contract. Bidders are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed pursuant to the CUC Procurement Regulations. This Invitation for Bids does not commit CUC to the award of a contract or contracts, nor to pay any cost incurred in the preparation and submission of bids in anticipation of a contract.

Questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from pre-registered bidders and must be submitted in writing no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on December 14, 2023** to Mr. Manny B. Sablan, Jr., CUC Procurement & Supply Purchasing Administrator, via email address manny.sablan@cucgov.org, with a copy to Larry Manacop, Acting Chief Engineer via email at larry.manacop@cucgov.org, Joel Puyat, Engineer via email at joel.puyat@cucgov.org and Ms. Christie L. Sablan, Procurement & Supply, Senior Administrative Technician via email address at christie.sablan@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids for any reason and waive any defects in said bid proposal, if in its sole opinion, to do so would be in the best interest of CUC. All bids shall become the property of CUC.

BETTINA G. TERLAJE
Acting Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

COMMONWEALTH UTILITIES CORPORATION
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

INVITATION FOR BIDS
CUC-IFB-24-002

AGINGAN WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT IMPROVEMENTS

The Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) is soliciting competitive sealed bids from qualified firms for the Construction of Agingan Wastewater Treatment Plant Improvements in Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The work consists of furnishing all labor, supervision, equipment, materials and supplies for the construction of various improvements within the Agingan Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) for the project referred to as the AGINGAN WWTP IMPROVEMENTS, Saipan, CNMI under Project No. S18-065 and Project No. S20-079.

The work generally includes, but is not limited to:

Project No. S18-065
Installation of the owner-furnished primary screen within 120 calendar days after Notice to Proceed is issued. Additionally, replacement of the clarifier drive; rehabilitation of the headworks includes replacement of the weir gates to stop gate, a 1/2-ton hand crank hoist/crane; clarifier bypass; electrical service rehabilitation, replacement of the existing Motor Control Center (MCC), installation of a generator automatic transfer switch (ATS) and digester decanter improvements. The work shall be done in accordance with Project No. S18-065 Plans and Specifications.

Project No. S20-079
Provision of temporary facilities including bypass pumping; furnishing and installing new Vortex Grit Removal Equipment and headworks slide gates, which will require demolition of certain elements within and improvements to the existing headworks channel and deck area; replacement of the existing surface aerator equipment in the North/South Aeration Tanks and Aerobic Digester Tank with a new surface aerator equipment which will require modifications to the existing concrete tank structures; replacement of existing pipe supports for the Aeration Basin influent piping; associated electrical, instrumentation, and control improvements; demobilization; and all other work described in Project No. S20-079 Plans and Specifications.

The work shall be done without disruption to the daily operation of the wastewater system.

CUC requires the Project to be completed within 820 calendar days from the date of the award of contract.

The project is funded by a grant from the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA). The award of this project is contingent upon receipt of approval for project award from USEPA.

Prospective Bidders for this IFB must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply Division. The Bid Package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays, upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of \$200.00 (non-refundable) for one IFB package set.

A Pre-Bid Conference followed by a Site Visit is scheduled on **December 27, 2023 at 10:00 AM (ChST)** at the CUC Main Conference Room, 3rd Floor, Room No.17, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building.

One (1) original and Five (5) hard copies must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked **“CUC-IFB-24-002, Agingan Wastewater Treatment Plant Improvements”**, to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, **no later than 10:00 AM (ChST) on January 18, 2024**, at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered. Bid shall be submitted on the provided Bid Forms. Bidders are required to complete all Bid Forms. Bidders may supplement the form as appropriate. Bids will be required to be submitted under a condition of irrevocability for a period of 60 days after submission. **Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered.**

All bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid under the contract.

A **Bid Guarantee** of not less than fifteen (15%) percent of the total bid price must accompany the bids. The bid guarantee may be in cash, certified check, cashier's check, or bid bond executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety. A Payment Bond of one hundred (100%) percent and a Performance Bond of one hundred (100%) percent of the total bid price will be required upon the execution of the contract by the successful bidder. The Payment and Performance bond must be executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety. Surety Company must be authorized to do business in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

All insurers' questions, concerns and qualification shall be handled by the Department of Commerce Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC). The OIC is tasked with regulating and monitoring compliance to the CNMI's Insurance Code (Title 4, Division 7). *Bidders are required to submit a clearance from the OIC certifying their insurer of choice is in compliance with the CNMI's Insurance Code.*

All bidders are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed pursuant to the CUC Procurement Regulations.

All questions or request for clarification regarding this project must be submitted in writing no later than **10:00 (ChST) on December 28, 2023** to Mr. Manny B. Sablan, CUC Purchasing Administrator, via email at manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to Mr. Larry Manacop, Acting Chief Engineer – via email at larry.manacop@cucgov.org, and Marcela Tenorio, Procurement & Supply, Senior Administrative Technician – via email at marcela.tenorio@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids and waive any imperfection in the bid proposal in the best interest of the government. All bids shall become the property of CUC.

BETTINA G. TERLAJE
Acting Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

Manta Ray Battalion donates 300 lbs of canned goods to Karidat

The Saipan Southern High School Manta Ray Battalion donated 300 lbs of canned goods to nonprofit organization Karidat Social Services last Dec. 21, 2023.

The canned food drive began in November, and throughout that time, the SSHS students donated 284 canned goods.

"It was a really helpful process to help the people in need for the holidays. It took us a whole month to gather all that food, and in the end, as a whole battalion, we did a massive good job of helping out the community," said C/Sgt. Vikaila Palacios.

C/2Lt. Ashley Villagomez echoed what Palacios said,

"The canned food drive is one of the special events we do here at the Manta Ray Battalion because of the great impact it brings to the community because not every family is so fortunate to have a meal and food in general during Christmas time and it's an amazing feeling knowing that we're making a positive impact during this time of the year."

Manta Ray Battalion executive officer C/Maj. Amundus Malentino said, "The Manta Ray Battalion has a canned food drive during this time of year as it is the season of thanks, love, and appreciation. I am beyond grateful to have been a part



Saipan Southern High School Manta Ray Battalion cadets pose with the 300 lbs of canned goods they recently donated to Karidat Social Services. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

of this event since it is all for a good cause. Thank you to everyone who contributed to our canned food drive! Happy holidays!"

The Manta Ray Battalion extended its thanks to all SSHS students along with

their instructor, CSM (Ret.) Richard Basa, for contributing to this year's canned food

drive, and wish everyone happy holidays from the Manta Ray Battalion. (PR)

Radewagen supports amicus brief concerning Antiquities Act 'abuses' in relation to PRIMNM

WASHINGTON, D.C.— Delegate Uifa'atali Amata Radewagen (R-A. Samoa) on Thursday filed a letter in support of the amici brief in the Supreme Court concerning abusive use of the Antiquities Act, which has been used to create and expand the Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument.

"The PRIMNM was over the size of California when first created, then expanded to four times that, and now proposals exist to make it as large an area as the United States," said Radewagen. "It is just abusive to take away an area of waters the size of our country and potentially remove all our fish-

ing rights in this immense area. I encouraged the court along with my 28 congressional colleagues to oppose expansion and curb such abuses."

Radewagen's letter to the Supreme Court of the United States supports a Congressional Amici Curiae Brief filed in the matters of *American Forest Resource Council v. the United States of America* and *Murphy Company v. Biden*.

Radewagen's letter states: "As Congresswoman of American Samoa and a Congressional Western Caucus member and vice chair whose jurisdiction has been impacted by the Pacific Remote Islands Marine Na-

tional Monument creation and expansion I join my 28 Congressional colleagues in support of the amici brief related to Antiquities Act abuses."

She continues, "An amicus brief to the Supreme Court supporting the limiting of presidential authority under the Antiquities Act was filed in support of the petitions for writ of certiorari urging the Supreme Court to review *American Forest Resource Council v. the United States of America* and *Murphy Company v. Biden*." (PR)

Judiciary closed on Dec. 25 and 26

In observance of the Christmas season, the Judiciary facilities on Saipan, Tinian, and Rota, will be closed on Monday, Dec. 25, 2023 and on Tuesday, Dec. 26, 2023.

While facilities are closed, Judiciary personnel may be activated for emergency and essential services. Bail, family protection, emergency and time-sensitive hearings may be set as necessary.

Please visit the Judiciary's website at www.nmjudiciary.gov for court information.

The Judiciary facilities will resume regular business hours on Wednesday, Dec. 27, 2023.

For additional information or inquiries, contact the following Supreme Court clerks of court:

■ Judy T. Aldan, Esq.
(670) 236-9718
(670) 788-4363
judy.aldan@nmjudiciary.gov

■ Patrick V. Diaz
(670) 235-4258 or 236-9703
(670) 783-8417
patrick.diaz@nmjudiciary.gov (PR)



Faith, Hope and
KARIDAT
Catholic Charities - Diocese of Chalan Kanoa

Request for Proposal for Financial Audit

Karidat Social Services is soliciting competitive sealed proposals to perform a financial and compliance audit in accordance with the Generally Accepted Auditing Standards (GAAS), the Single Audit Act Amendments of 1996 and in accordance with the provisions of Uniform Guidance for the fiscal years 2023, 2024 and 2025.

I. Contents of Proposal: The following information must be included in the Audit Proposal:

- A. Title Page Containing
 1. RFP Subject
 2. Name of the Firm
 3. Local Address
 4. Telephone Number(s)
 5. Email address
 6. Name of contact person
 7. Submission date

II. Transmittal Letter:

- A. A brief statement of your understanding of the work to be performed and an affirmative statement to perform work within the time period stipulated.
- B. State all-inclusive fees for which the audit will be performed.

III. Firm Profile:

Provide a brief description of you firm's personnel education background and experience, number of staff, staff level (partner, manager, supervisor, etc.) and listing of clients serviced. The firm must make an affirmative statement that at least the partners are Certified Public Accounts (CPA's).

IV. Proposal Evaluation Criteria: The proposal will be evaluated on the basis of the following criteria.

- A. Responsiveness of the proposal in clearly stating understanding of the work to be performed.
 1. Audit coverage
 2. Overall estimates as well as the time estimates for each major section of the work to be performed.
- B. Qualifications and experience of the firm
 1. Size and structure of the firm
 2. Ability to maintain continuity of project
 3. Experience of the firm in auditing Federal Financial Assistance programs and Non-Profit Organizations.
- C. Qualification and experience of staff to be assigned: education, position in the firm, number of years, and types of experience will be considered
 1. Qualifications of the audit team
 2. Supervision to be exercised over the firm's audit team
- D. Audit Fee

V. Audit Administration Matters:

- A. Karidat staff will prepare schedule as required by the Auditor.
- B. Audit Planning meetings, interim conferences and exit conference may be attended by the following officials
 1. Karidat's Board of Directors, the Executive Director, Accountants, and the Administrative Officer.
- C. Karidat will issue the Contract Award on February 9, 2024.
- D. The audit field work must be completed by May 15, 2024.
- E. The draft audit report must be completed by June 15, 2024.
- F. The Final Audit Report for each year will be transmitted on June 30th of the corresponding year.

VI. Confidentiality of Audit Proposals: All audit proposals will be reviewed in a confidential manner. Proposals must be labeled "CONFIDENTIAL" and transmitted to the Executive Director, Karidat Social Services, P.O. Box 501058, Saipan, MP 96950. It may also be hand delivered to Karidat's Office located at the, 5483 Dandan Road, Dandan Village, Saipan.

COMMONWEALTH PORTS AUTHORITY

MAIN OFFICE: SAIPAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, 2ND FLOOR ARRIVAL BLDG.
PO BOX 501055 • SAIPAN • MP • 96950
PHONE: (1-670) 237-6500 / 1 • FAX: (1-670) 234-5962
E-MAIL ADDRESS: CPA.ADMIN@PTICOM.COM • WEBSITE: [HTTPS://WWW.CNMPORTS.COM](https://www.cnmports.com)

Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport "Car Rental Concession" Request for Proposals for: CPA-RFP-001-24 CPA Concession No. CRS-2023-01

The Commonwealth Ports Authority ("CPA" or "Authority") is soliciting proposals for the award of one (1) concession granting the privilege to provide motor vehicle rental services to the traveling public (including the provision of insurance related to motor vehicles rented in the operation of such motor vehicle rental services) at the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport ("Car Rental Concession"). The successful proposer will be expected to provide motor vehicle rental services in accordance with its concession and concession agreement at the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport for a period of two years with an option upon entering into a concession agreement with the Authority.

The date of issuance of CPA-Concession No. CRS-2023-01 is December 6, 2023, and it can be obtained at the issuing office: CPA Administration Office, Saipan International Airport, P.O. Box 501055, Saipan, MP 96950, Second floor of Arrival terminal at the Saipan International Airport.

Proposals must be addressed to Commonwealth Ports Authority, Attn: Car Rental Concessions Evaluation Committee, CPA Administration Office, Saipan International Airport, P.O. Box 501055, Saipan, MP 96950; and submitted to and received by the CPA Administration Office (second floor of arrival terminal at the Saipan International Airport) by or before 4:00 p.m. on January 9, 2024, at which time the proposal period shall expire. Proposals must be accompanied with a non-refundable administrative fee of \$100.00. Payment shall be made in cash, credit card, or cashier's check payable to the Commonwealth Ports Authority to defray the costs associated with handling and considering the proposal. Proposals are not required to include a prepaid minimum concession fee.

The Commonwealth Ports Authority reserves the right to cancel this RFP and to reject any and all proposals in accordance with its Concession Regulations (NMIAC Chapter 40-70).

/s/
LEO B. TUDELA
Executive Director

Coast Guard concludes M/V *Voyager* pollution response, continues discussions for removal

SANTA RITA, Guam—In response to the grounding of the motor vessel *Voyager*, a 116-foot Indonesian-flagged ship, adjacent to Piti Channel following Typhoon Mawar on May 24, 2023, the U.S. Coast Guard, under the leadership of Capt. Nicholas Simmons, the commander of U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam and the Captain of the Port, has taken decisive action to protect Guam's waterways.

By late November, the operation successfully recovered approximately 51,000 gallons of fuel oil mixture, around four cubic yards of oiled debris, and various hazardous substances from the M/V *Voyager*, prioritizing environmental safety and the likelihood of operational success. The U.S. Coast Guard team is continuing discussions with partners to advocate for the removal of the vessel from its current location.

"Our top priorities are ensuring the safety of our waterways and safeguarding the environment. We have carefully considered our options and have decided to leave the vessel in its current location for the time being, given the situation's complexities," said Simmons.



USCG

The U.S. Coast Guard captain of the port Guam zone explains to the U.S. Coast Guard 14th District commander the status of the pollution response on the motor vessel *Voyager*, a 116-foot Indonesian-flagged ship adjacent to Piti Channel following Typhoon Mawar, in Piti, Guam, in August 2023. By late November, the operation successfully recovered approximately 51,000 gallons of fuel oil mixture, around four cubic yards of oiled debris, and various hazardous substances from the M/V *Voyager*, prioritizing environmental safety and the likelihood of operational success.

The decision not to sink or move the vessel was made after a thorough evaluation, taking into account potential environmental impacts. While this choice drew concerns from some in the community, the U.S. Coast Guard remains dedicated to ongoing dialogue with all stakeholders, including the Port Users Group, charter boat operators, and the local maritime community. The COTP is also scheduled

to further brief the governor before the new year.

Simmons further emphasized, "We understand and acknowledge the concerns raised by waterway users and the community. Safety and commerce are paramount, and we will continue to monitor the situation closely, taking all necessary steps to prevent any major adverse effects."

The M/V *Voyager* incident underscores the challenges of

marine salvage operations and the importance of responsible maritime practices. The U.S. Coast Guard remains committed to working collaboratively with local partners to enhance regional maritime safety and security.

In July 2021, the M/V *Voyager* arrived in Guam and underwent an initial Port State Control examination by U.S. Coast Guard examiners in advance of planned repairs and a

sale. A follow-up examination in September 2021 revealed significant deficiencies and concerns over crew abandonment. By October, plans for repairs through Guam Shipyard were made, but the crew was repatriated in November when the owner took no action. In November 2021, Guam Shipyard became the caretaker. In February 2023, the Port of Guam demanded removal, leading to legal disputes. By March 2023, the agent for the vessel legally took possession from the owner due to a lack of response. Typhoon Mawar

in May 2023 caused grounding and an ongoing pollutant removal operation. Complex discussions surround the vessel's future due to salvage complexities, legal aspects, and regulatory requirements.

U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam is responsible for safeguarding U.S. waters in the Oceania region, ensuring maritime safety, security, and environmental protection. The Coast Guard collaborates with Pacific partners and stakeholders to uphold the highest standards of maritime excellence. (USCG)

Unified Command ends western Maui wildfire emergency support operations

HONOLULU, Hawaii—State and federal responders with the U.S. Coast Guard Western Maui Wildfire Emergency Support Function #10 Unified Command, comprised of U.S. Coast Guard, Hawaii Department of Health, and the Hawaii Department of Land and Natural Resources Division of Boating and Ocean Recreation announced on Dec. 18, 2023 the final stage of operations in Lahaina Harbor.

The Unified Command, working with the U.S. Coast Guard's primary contractor, Global Diving & Salvage, and subcontractors Sea Engineering, Inc., American Marine, Pacific Environmental Company, PB Sullivan Equipment, Nā 'Aikāne o Maui, Inc., and Aina Archaeology, completed recovery and removal operations in or adjacent to Lahaina Harbor. Response teams:

■ Removed approximately 10,137 gallons of petroleum product and 24,831 lbs of hazardous materials.

■ Reunited 17 vessels with minimal damage to their owners.

■ Worked with DLNR-DOBOR to identify ownership and adjudicate 65 vessels, from 87 unique targets identified, before final disposition.

■ Removed all remaining damaged vessels and debris.

Under the ESF #3 Mis-

sion Assignment, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will conduct final disposition of fire-damaged vessels and incident-generated debris removed during harbor operations. The ACOE will coordinate with DLNR-DOBOR to return items of sentimental value to boat owners as they break down the vessel debris with a focus on maximizing recyclability of materials.



The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency also assisted ESF #10 operations by including hazardous materials removed from the harbor into their waste stream for final disposition. Hazardous materials included batteries, waste oils, fuels, paints, and household cleaners.

"Our crews have worked tirelessly to remove pollution and hazardous materials in the initial steps toward the future restoration of Lahaina Harbor," said Capt. Melanie Burnham, U.S. Coast Guard ESF #10 incident commander. "This has been a team effort with continued support from our Unified Command partners, contractors, archeological monitors, cultural observers, and Coast Guard responders from across the country. Together with our community, county, state, and federal partners, we were able to complete this mission safely and efficiently while maintaining the highest regard for

the historical and cultural significance of the region."

The Federal Emergency Management Agency assigned \$15,470,330 for the ESF #10 mission to aid in recovery efforts and address environmental and hazardous threats resulting from fire-impacted vessels. The

Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act of 1988 authorized and funded this Mission Assignment for the U.S. Coast Guard that was agreed upon by the State and FEMA and delineated the work for vessel and debris removal operations. (USCG)


**DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS
CNMI GOVERNMENT**


INVITATION TO BID
ITB NO.: DPW24-ITB No.: 42400017

SUBMISSION DATE: January 19, 2024 TIME: 10:00 A.M.

"Repair of the Sugar Dock Beach Park"

COPIES OF THE SPECIFICATIONS MAY BE OBTAINED AT THE TECHNICAL SERVICES DIVISION, DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS, LOCATED ON SECOND FLOOR, OLEAI JOETEN COMMERCIAL CENTER, SAN JOSE, SAIPAN, DURING REGULAR WORKING HOURS.

THE PROVISIONS OF THE CNMI PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS, NMIAC SECTION 70-30.3-725 AND 70-30.3-730 PROHIBITING GRATUITIES, KICKBACKS AND CONTINGENT FEES SHALL APPLY.

The project package will be available on or after **December 19, 2023** at Technical Services Division, Department of Public Works, located on Second Floor, Oleai Joeten Commercial Center, San Jose, Saipan. A non-refundable payment of One Hundred Dollars (\$100.00) is required for each set. Payment must be made to the CNMI Treasurer and a receipt of payment must be presented when obtaining the Scope of Work at the DPW Technical Services Division.

There will be a **Pre-bid Conference** for this project on **January 05, 2024**, 9:00 a.m. local time at the Project Site at Sugar Dock Beach Park, Saipan. The Prospective bidders are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the site. All question regarding this project must be submitted in writing no later than 4:30 p.m. local time on **January 10, 2024** to **Mr. Anthony A. Camacho, Director of Technical Services Division**, 2nd Floor, Oleai Joeten Commercial Center, Saipan or fax to (670) 234-3547. Response to questions shall be shared with prospective bidders.

THE CNMI GOVERNMENT RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS, OR PORTIONS THEREOF, AND WAIVE IMMATERIAL DEFECTS IF TO DO SO WOULD BE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CNMI GOVERNMENT.

/S/ RAY N. YUMUL
 SECRETARY, DPW

/S/ BRIEN SERS NICHOLAS JR.
 Acting Director, Division of
 Procurement Services


NORTHERN MARIANAS HOUSING CORPORATION
 P.O. BOX 500514, Saipan, MP 96950-0514
 Email: nmhc@nmhc.gov.mp Website: http://www.cnmi-cdbgdr.com

INVITATION FOR BID (IFB)
NMHC IFB 2024-003

(This ad is paid by NMHC by HUD funds)

BID SUBMISSION DATE: February 09, 2024, 2:00 p.m.

DANDAN WATER TANK REPLACEMENT PROJECT

Project Package will be available on December 26, 2023, at the NMHC Central Office in Garapan, Saipan, during regular working hours (7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.) Monday thru Friday except CNMI holidays. A non-refundable payment of One-Hundred Dollars (\$100.00) is required for each set of the project package. Payment must be made payable to NMHC and receipt of payment must be presented when obtaining the project package at the reception counter.


The provisions on the NMHC Procurement regulations, NMIAC 100-60-725 AND 100-60-730 Prohibiting Gratuities, Kickbacks and Contingent Fees shall apply.

A Mandatory Pre-Bid Conference will be held at the NMHC Central Office located in Garapan, Saipan on **January 09, 2024, 10:00 a.m.** In addition, a Mandatory site Visit/Inspection of the project site will be conducted immediately after the Pre-Bid Conference. Failure to attend both the Mandatory Pre-bid conference and the Mandatory site Visit/Inspection will be considered a non-responsive bidder.

For more information, contact Mr. Jacob Muna, Office Manager, at (670) 234-9447 or via email at officemanager@nmhc.gov.net during business hours, 7:30am - 4:30pm Monday through Friday, except CNMI holidays.

/s/ JESSE S. PALACIOS
 Corporate Director

/s/ MERCEDES "MARCIE" M. TOMOKANE
 Chairwoman
 NMHC Board of Directors


NORTHERN MARIANAS HOUSING CORPORATION
 P.O. BOX 500514, Saipan, MP 96950-0514
 Email: nmhc@nmhc.gov.mp • Website: http://www.nmhc.gov.net

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)
NMHC RFP 2024-001

(This ad is paid for NMHC with HUD funds)

BID SUBMISSION DATE: February 09, 2024, 2:00 p.m.

INSTALLATION OF THE COMMONWEALTH UTILITIES CORPORATION (CUC) UNDERGROUND POWER SERVICE TO CRITICAL LOADS PROJECT

Proposal Package will be available on December 26, 2023, at the NMHC Central Office in Garapan, Saipan, during regular working hours (7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.) Monday thru Friday except CNMI holidays. A non-refundable payment of One-Hundred Dollars (\$100.00) is required for each set of the project package. Payment must be made payable to NMHC and receipt of payment must be presented when obtaining the project package at the reception counter.

The provisions on the NMHC Procurement regulations, NMIAC 100-60-725 AND 100-60-730 Prohibiting Gratuities, Kickbacks and Contingent Fees shall apply.

A Mandatory Pre-Proposal Meeting will be held at the NMHC Tinian Field Office located at the NMC Campus, San Jose, Tinian, on **January 11, 2024, 10:00 a.m.** In addition, a Mandatory site Visit/Inspection of the project site will be conducted immediately after the Pre-Proposal Meeting. Failure to attend both the Mandatory Pre-Proposal meeting and the Mandatory site Visit/Inspection will be considered a non-responsive proposer/offeror.

For more information, contact Mr. Jacob Muna, Office Manager, at (670) 234-9447 or via email at officemanager@nmhc.gov.net during business hours, 7:30am - 4:30pm Monday through Friday, except CNMI holidays.

/s/ JESSE S. PALACIOS
 Corporate Director
 Northern Marianas Housing Corporation (NMHC)

/s/ MERCEDES "MARCIE" M. TOMOKANE
 Chairwoman
 NMHC Board of Directors

Opinion

Hafa Adai!

Saipan Tribune

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MEMBER

AP The Associated Press

Pacific Islands News Association

EDITORIAL

Teachers fall short as ignorance fuels antisemitism's rise

There's an epidemic of ignorance surging through America, and it's especially virulent among the young. As we've seen played out on campuses and public spaces recently, impassioned but clueless youth are weighing in on the Israel-Hamas war without a hint as to the history of the region and its people.

The buzzword du jour is "colonizers," applied to the Jews in Israel. Even if students weren't privy to extensive classes on world history, how have they not been taught that Jews are indigenous to the region, going back thousands of years? In a little over a week we'll be celebrating Christmas, marking the birth of a Jew in Bethlehem, Judea over 2,000 years ago. Jesus was not an outlier, nor a European.

Biblical history aside, there are enough non-sectarian historical records and archaeological evidence supporting the fact that the Israelites made their mark millennia before 1948.

But students are lacking this knowledge, and more. As The Hill reported, a fifth of Americans ages 18-29 believe the Holocaust was a myth, according to a new poll from The Economist/YouGov. Another 30% of young people said they didn't agree or disagree with the statement.

Ignorance helps antisemitism gain ground and leaves young minds vulnerable to progressive propaganda that's full of incendiary phrases, but few if any facts.

Some lawmakers are trying to right the ship. Earlier this month a bipartisan group of senators, led by Sen. Jacky Rosen, D-Nev., introduced a bill to reauthorize the Never Again Education Act, providing federal funding for Holocaust education.

"Failing to educate students about the gravity and scope of the Holocaust is a disservice to the memory of its victims and to our duty to prevent such atrocities in the future," Rosen said in a statement. "At a time of rising antisemitism, reauthorizing the bipartisan Never Again Education Act will help ensure that educators have the resources needed to teach students about the Holocaust and help counter antisemitic bigotry and hate."

There's a problem – what if the educators need education as well?

As has been reported, the Massachusetts Teachers Association's executive board voted to urge the National Educators Association to put pressure on President Joe Biden to stop funding Israel, which the board characterized as a "genocidal war on the Palestinian people in Gaza."

Teachers presumably have access to dictionaries, but in case some don't, genocide is the deliberate killing of a large number of people from a nation or ethnic group with the aim of destroying that nation or group. As in the terrorist group Hamas slaughtering, mutilating, raping and kidnapping Israelis on Oct. 7, and vowing to do it again and again. The destruction of the Jewish people is literally their mission statement.

The deaths of Gazans caught up in this war are devastating, and the humanitarian crisis monstrous. But do those urging a ceasefire not realize that Hamas is using Palestinians as human shields and taking the humanitarian aid for itself? Hamas is not in the business of helping Palestinians.

One of the slogans making the rounds is "standing on the right side of history."

See **TEACHERS** on Page 9

Challenges of a leader-lite world

The Donald and Bibi are two of a kind. Among the things they have in common is that they are not up to coping with the challenges of today.

We are about to see why.

The world has been watching as these two men in their mid-70s, with courtroom trials pending, have appeared willing to do whatever it takes to regain or retain the power – and not end up in jail. Even if it meant shattering their nation's democracy. They have seemed desperate to remain in control. Until things exploded out of control. January 6. October 7.

In the runup to America's Inauguration Day 2021, still-President Donald Trump was scheming to break his democracy's election system. He hoped to overturn or at least decertify the 2020 election he knew he'd lost. Trump wanted more than merely massive protests. Trump wanted "wild." And on Jan. 6, watching TV, Trump finally saw his kind of good news: Bashing, bloodshed, Capitol cops overrun; senators and representatives fleeing in fear. For hours, Trump did nothing to stop it.

In 2023, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, while famously on trial for three corruption crimes that he says he didn't commit, unveiled a controversial proposal to weaken the Supreme Court's judicial review power, a foundation of Israel's democracy. Protests erupted. Netanyahu tore his country apart as never before.

Meanwhile, Netanyahu had begun a series of secret schemes that backfired and helped enable Hamas's Oct. 7 invasion. Because Netanyahu's religious far-right coalition hopes to control the entire West Bank, his government diverted Israel's military and intel forces from Hamas-ruled Gaza and refocused them on the Palestinian West Bank. Netanyahu thought Hamas would cause him no trouble because he was covertly buying off Hamas with Qatar's money. But Hamas conned Netanyahu and attacked a surprised, defenseless southern Israel.

Why did Hamas act now? Hamas's prime terror-financer, Iran, desperately wanted to stop Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States from normalizing relations with Israel. Hamas goaded Israel into massive retaliation bombing aimed at Hamas troops and arsenals that were hidden underground, beneath the apartments of the Gaza's Palestinian civilians they were allegedly protecting.

On Oct. 7, as Hamas attackers slaughtered, raped, mutilated and kidnapped defenseless Israelis, Netanyahu's vaunted military wasn't there to save Israel's civilians. Netanyahu did what Hamas expected, massive bombing that first killed thousands of Hamas's human shields. Soon the world was wallpapered with visuals of Israel killing Palestinian civilians. Global outrage and antisemitism erupted. It became the worst of times for Saudis to ally with Israel. Iran and Hamas high-fived.

In today's world, we can no longer allow the Trumps and Netanyahus to be running things. After all, a more globally savvy Netan-

By **MARTIN SCHRAM**

Tribune News Service

Martin Schram, an op-ed columnist for Tribune News Service, is a veteran Washington journalist, author and TV documentary executive. Readers may send him email at martin.schram@gmail.com.



yahu could have done more to project Israel's global presence and humanity—even after the shock of Oct. 7.

Leadership today isn't about the left or right, nor the young or old. While Americans and Israelis should realize by now they can't expect Trump or Netanyahu to rise to such an occasion, if a Ronald Reagan-type communicator were with us today, we sure could see him fulfilling our leadership vacuum.

Leading in today's world comes down to having the vision and guts to meet the challenge of the moment. Even when it is unexpected. We need that now more than ever.

EPILOGUE: Imagine a perceptive Israeli prime minister who anticipated how the world would erupt after Israel's necessary retaliation – but understood how to help Israel get on the humane side of civilian-protecting.

Picture that globally savvy Israeli prime minister appealing to the world after Oct. 7, in a remote speech to the United Nations—and truthfully redefining the global challenge of this crisis moment:

"Citizens of the world, we face a unique challenge. Yes, Israel must retaliate against our Hamas invaders who vow they will exterminate Israel. But we must secure the freedom of not just one, but two different sets of hostages Hamas has simultaneously imprisoned in Gaza.

"One hostage set is the 248 people Hamas kidnapped in Israel—including women, children and the elderly.

"The other hostage set numbers perhaps 1 million civilian Gaza Palestinians who Hamas trapped into being their human shields. Hamas's rulers and troops are hiding underground, beneath their apartments. Hamas knows those innocent Palestinians will die first when Israel bombs in retaliation. Hamas doesn't care. But Israel cares. And the world cares.

"We live alongside our Palestinian fellow-citizens of Israel. They are as repulsed as we were by those videos of Hamas invaders killing babies, raping women—and cheering as they did it. We are asking the United Nations to lead a world effort to free both sets of Hamas hostages.

"We want to work with all the world, even as we must pursue our attackers."

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A war between Hezbollah and Israel is the last thing the US wants

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin is traveling to the Middle East this week in part to press Israel to moderate its war plans in Gaza and prepare for a transition to lower-intensity operations against top Hamas commanders. President Joe Biden's administration is increasingly impatient about the humanitarian situation in Gaza, a small coastal territory that has essentially become hell on earth.

The Israelis, meanwhile, are increasingly impatient about the situation in the north, near Israel's border with Lebanon. Ever since the war in Gaza began on Oct. 7, the Israeli military and Hezbollah, the Lebanese terrorist group that runs south Lebanon, have been firing at each other across the United Nations-demarcated border. Hezbollah drones and missiles, some of which are precision-guided, frequently target empty Israeli settlements and military posts. The Israelis quickly retaliate with airstrikes against Hezbollah weapons facilities, launch sites and Hezbollah cells preparing attacks. Approximately 94 Hezbollah fighters, as well as eight Israeli soldiers, have been killed in the bombardments, along with dozens of civilians. Tens of thousands of Israelis have evacuated the northern towns and kibbutzim near the Israel-Lebanon border.

Fortunately, the exchanges have been contained to the border region. But it doesn't take a geopolitical expert to understand that one errant rocket or airstrike with a high casualty rate could turn controlled escalation into chaos. Indeed, just as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is receiving pressure from some quarters to negotiate another truce with Hamas, Netanyahu is getting flak from Israelis in the north who want to return to their homes. Earlier in the war, Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant made the case that Hezbollah should be attacked preemptively to degrade the militia group's ability to conduct an Oct. 7-style attack in the north. That recommendation was ultimately rejected.

Yet as hostilities on the Israel-Lebanon border persist, Netanyahu may eventually have a change of heart. Gallant remains committed to his position, warning the United States, Lebanon, Iran and every state in between that "if the world doesn't get Hezbollah away from the border, Israel will do it."

An Israeli military spokesman was more ominous: "Hezbollah—a proxy of Iran—is dragging Lebanon into an unnecessary war that would have devastating consequences for the people of Lebanon." The statement amounts to a soft ultimatum to the world.

From Washington's standpoint, the ultimatum evokes mixed feelings. On the one hand, Hezbollah is the region's most formidable terrorist group, equipped with state-of-the-art missiles that can rain down fury on every major city in Israel. Yet on the other, a large-scale Israeli campaign against Hezbollah, even if it were warranted, is the last thing the U.S. wants right now. The Biden administration has invested significant diplomatic capital into containing the fighting to Gaza and preventing it from spreading to other faultlines in the Middle East. Austin, Secretary of State Antony Blinken, CIA Director William Burns, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs CQ Brown Jr. and President Joe Biden himself have all flown to the region in the hope of tamping down the flames of war. While all of these officials recognize that Israel has a responsibility to defend its citizens from terrorism, none of them wants to see Israel take rash actions that could cause more problems and suck the U.S. into a war it would (rightly) rather avoid.

We should be under no illusions: If Israel were to act preemptively against Hezbollah, and the Lebanese militia group were to retaliate by launching some of the more than 150,000 missiles in its arsenal, it's highly likely the U.S. would get more directly involved on Israel's behalf. The U.S. military posture in the Middle East is already in a high state of alert and larger than it has been in years. Two aircraft carriers remain stationed in the region's waters, both carrying numerous fighter and bomber aircraft onboard. There are too many U.S. warships in the Red Sea, Persian Gulf and Eastern Mediterranean to count, but all of them are equipped with the kinds of cruise missiles that would allow Washington to target Hezbollah positions at a relatively safe distance. The Biden administration has reportedly discussed possible military options against Hezbollah.

To date, all of those discussions are preliminary. This is what U.S. officials in the national security space do: They consider

By **DANIEL DEPETRIS**
Chicago Tribune

Daniel DePetris is a fellow at Defense Priorities and a foreign affairs columnist for the Chicago Tribune.



various contingencies and plan in the hopes that the worse-case scenario never occurs.

Averting the worse-case scenario, however, takes a lot of work, patience, persistence and frank talk. The U.S. has actually been frank with the Israelis at times, for instance by reprimanding them for striking the U.S.-supported Lebanese army more than 34 times since October. (Some of these strikes were likely by accident.)

But the possibility of the war in Gaza expanding to Lebanon is of such gravity and consequence that working to avoid it is—or at least should be—a top Biden administration priority. Given Hezbollah's extensive arsenal, its 100,000-person army and decades of experience fighting Israel, a full-blown conflagration could get bloody quickly. Israel isn't ignorant of the risks—there's a reason why around 80,000 Israeli civilians were evacuated from their homes when the Israeli-Lebanese border started to become an active combat zone.

Even so, emotionalism is running high in Israel. While completely understandable, it's also dangerous because emotion poisons prudent policymaking. The U.S. is continuing to press upon the parties to, if not de-escalate, then at least keep current hostilities confined to a limited area.

Ultimately, however, the spat between Israel and Hezbollah won't be resolved through military means but by a diplomatic agreement that solidifies an internationally enforced buffer zone along the border. That is easier said than done.

'Tis the season to be more neighborly. And doing so can transform communities

You rake your leaves and wake up the next morning only to see more on your lawn. You look to your neighbor's lawn and realize their leaves have found their way onto your lawn. You say to yourself, "If only they would rake their leaves, my yard would be fine." How do we approach this situation? Do we let our frustration boil up? Do we talk to them about it? Do we simply stop talking to our neighbor altogether? Or do we offer to rake our neighbor's yard?

I prefer the last option. After all, I am a product of the 1970s, the time in which we watched shows such as "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood." He would often ask, "Won't you be my neighbor?" It was his way of saying that being a good neighbor was our responsibility.

During that decade, we looked at our neighbors as an extension of our family. Our neighbors inspired certain attitudes and behaviors. I recall having a conversation with my father decades ago on the subject. I told him a neighbor was only someone who lived next to you, but my father had a broader view. He said everyone on the block and in the entire community was our neighbor—hence the term "neighborhood." That taught me that I was accountable for my actions in the house and in the neighborhood because my parents, in some respects, viewed the community members as a part of our family.

Wouldn't it be nice to return to those days when we felt accountable to those who lived near us? Sadly, only 57% of Americans know some of their neighbors, a 2018 Pew Research Center survey found. Only about a quarter of Americans say they know most of their neighbors. When data is separated by age, it tells a story as to why we may see more violence in some communities among our youth and young adults. Only 20% for Americans 18 to 29 years old report knowing most of their neighbors, compared with 34% of those 65 years old and older.

In the community where I grew up, we had quite a few block clubs. They provided avenues and opportunities for neighbors to interact, communicate and build lasting relationships. In other words, we knew who our neighbors were. In many urban communities across the country, block clubs used to be more prevalent. They are local organizations that typically focus on the block that they represent. Parents and other members on the block would come together and in large respects held each other accountable for how the lawns and landscapes were kept, and how children in each family behaved in the community. When someone could not shovel their snow or rake their leaves, there were those who would help.

Other benefits these organizations provided were realized by the youth. Conflicts among them were often resolved quickly with assistance from adults. These organizations provided opportunities for parents and guardians to talk and communicate. Children felt safe to play on the block and in the neighborhood because the adults were in control of what was taking place. Law enforcement worked in concert with block club members when situations would occur that required a police presence. Those occurrences were few and far between.

This is a far cry from what is taking place in far too many communities now. From teen takeovers that result in the vandalism of businesses and vehicles, to smash-and-grab episodes perpetuated by far too many of our youths, how our youths define being neighborly is quite different than how it was viewed decades ago.

Unfortunately, we often look for answers outside of the community to address some of the things we can change and improve on our own. In "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood," he would visit local businesses and talk to people in the community. He would close

By **JERALD MCNAIR**
Chicago Tribune

Jerald McNair, who has a doctorate in education and a graduate degree in public policy, is a school administrator for South Holland School District 151.



the show with inspiring words that reassured our youths that they were valued. Where is that nowadays?

We can chart a new course by being more neighborly this holiday season. So instead of getting upset or disappointed if your neighbors don't shovel their snow or rake their leaves, ask if they need help. Offer to be of service. While being kind is free, the benefits are priceless. Perhaps it will lead to more safe spaces for our youths to play in. Perhaps, we'll see less violence and fewer conflicts.






Let us all work to restore peace, civility and happiness in our communities. Former President Barack Obama once said: "In the face of impossible odds, people who love this country can change it." While it often doesn't require government to help, our communities need us all to rethink what it means to truly be a good neighbor and live up to it.

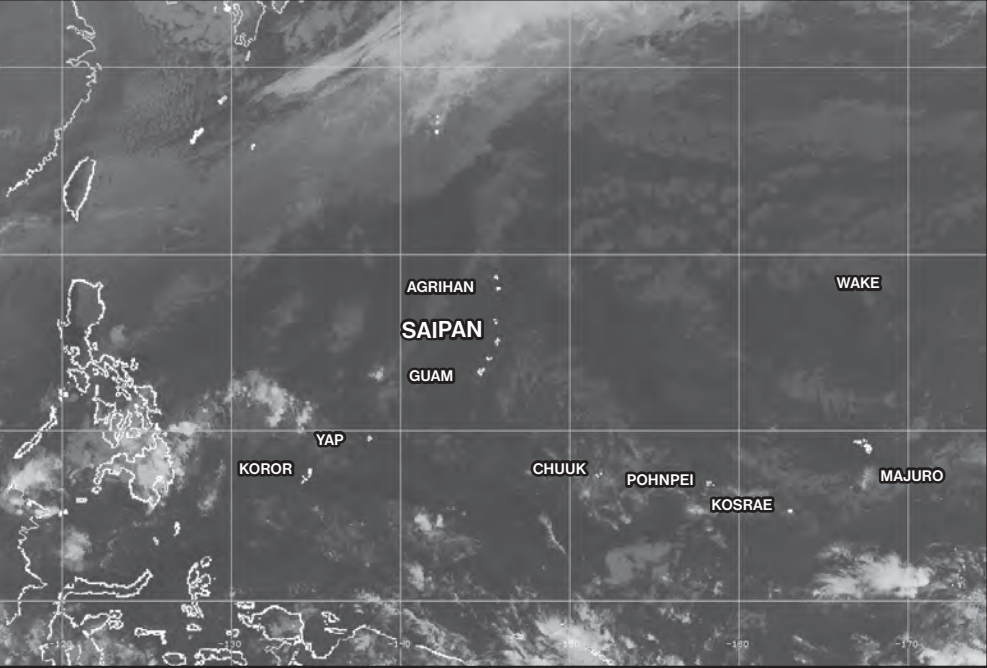
TEACHERS

From page 8

You can't do that if you don't know anything about history. Clearly, our schools are vastly shortchanging America's youth.

The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN									
TODAY		WEDNESDAY		THURSDAY		FRIDAY		SATURDAY	
									
Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 15 to 20 mph.		Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 10 to 20 mh.		Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 10 to 20 mh.		Breezy to windy. Partly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers.		Mostly cloudy with a 40 percent chance of showers.	
86	77°	86	77°	86	77°	86	77°	86	77°
YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE									



PICTURE TIME: 5:39 AM MONDAY, DECEMBER 25, 2023

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Satellite indicating partly to mostly cloudy skies with mainly isolated trade showers this morning. Latest buoy and altimetry passes showing seas 6 to 9 feet. Winds are moderate to fresh.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: <https://www.weather.gov/gum/>

MICRONESIA			▲▼°F
Guam and Rota	Partly Cloudy	86° / 79°	
Palau	Thunderstorms	84° / 77°	
Yap	Thunderstorms	86° / 79°	
Chuuk	Partly Cloudy	85° / 80°	
Pohnpei	Partly Cloudy	86° / 79°	
Kosrae	Partly Cloudy	86° / 79°	
Majuro	Thunderstorms	85° / 81°	

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:40 AM	5:54 PM
Wednesday	6:40 AM	5:54 PM
Thursday	6:41 AM	5:55 PM
Friday	6:41 AM	5:55 PM
Saturday	6:42 AM	5:56 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	-	5:45 AM	5:06 PM
Wednesday	-	6:42 AM	6:02 PM
Thursday	-	7:36 AM	6:58 PM
Friday	-	8:26 AM	7:53 PM
Saturday	-	9:10 AM	8:45 PM

AROUND THE GLOBE			▲▼°F
Auckland	Rain	72° / 61°	
Beijing	Sunny	28° / 9°	
Hong Kong	Mostly Cloudy	70° / 54°	
Honolulu	Mostly Cloudy	82° / 70°	
London	Cloudy	45° / 36°	
Los Angeles	Sunny	65° / 44°	
Manila	Rain	81° / 73°	
Melbourne	Partly Cloudy	91° / 75°	
Miami	Cloudy	78° / 74°	
New York	Partly Cloudy	42° / 37°	
Osaka	Mixed	43° / 36°	
Paris	Partly Cloudy	41° / 28°	
Busan	Sunny	36° / 21°	
Rome	Mostly Sunny	57° / 37°	
Salem	Rain	62° / 60°	
San Francisco	Sunny	57° / 46°	
Seoul	Sunny	23° / 9°	
Tokyo	Mostly Cloudy	46° / 39°	
Washington, DC	Partly Cloudy	50° / 44°	

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY			FEET
1:11 AM	Low Tide	-0.64	
8:30 AM	High Tide	1.70	
1:37 PM	Low Tide	1.14	
6:11 PM	High Tide	1.71	

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF DECEMBER 20, 2023

DEPARTURES				ARRIVALS			
SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)				GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN			
UA076	9:50AM	10:35AM	Daily	UA174	8:00AM	8:45AM	Daily
SAIPAN- NARITA (NRT)				NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN			
UA824	7:05AM	9:45AM	1, 3, 5	UA825	9:25PM	2:00AM+1	2, 4, 7
GUAM-MANILA (MNL)				MANILA (MNL)-GUAM			
PR 111	5:55AM	7:55AM	Daily	UA189	00:40AM	6:30AM	3, 6
UA193	7:50PM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Palau	PR110	10:05PM	3:55AM+1	Daily
UA183	7:55PM	9:50PM	Daily	UA192	10:40PM	6:30AM+1	2, 5 via Palau
				UA184	10:55PM	4:45AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7
SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)				MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN			
7C3403/2305	4:40AM	10:20PM	Daily	UA189/174	00:40AM	8:45AM+1	3, 6 via Guam
UA076/183	9:50AM	9:50PM	Daily via Guam	UA192/174	10:40PM	8:45AM+1	2, 5 via Palau, Guam
UA076/193	9:50AM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Guam, Palau	UA184/174	10:55PM	8:45AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7 via Guam
				7C2306/3406	11:15PM	3:30PM+1	Daily
SAIPAN-INCHEON (ICN)				INCHEON (ICN)-SAIPAN			
TW308	2:15AM	6:10AM	Daily	7C3406	10:10AM	3:30PM	Daily
7C3403	4:40AM	8:35AM	Daily	TW307	7:45PM	1:15AM+1	Daily
7C3405	4:35PM	8:25PM	Daily	7C3404	10:15PM	3:35AM+1	Daily
OZ626	3:10AM	6:55AM	4, 7	OZ625	8:20PM	1:40AM+1	3, 6

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines; PR, Philippine Airlines; TW, T'Way Air; OZ, Asiana Airlines; 7C, Jeju Air; BX, Air Busan • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF OCTOBER 30, 2023

SAIPAN TO ROTA					
FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1301	SAIPAN	ROTA	08:30	09:00	Oct 21-31, 2023
1302	SAIPAN	ROTA	10:30	11:00	Daily
1303	SAIPAN	ROTA	15:30	16:00	Daily
ROTA TO SAIPAN					
FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3101	ROTA	SAIPAN	9:30	10:00	Oct 21-31, 2023
3102	ROTA	SAIPAN	11:30	12:00	Saturday & Sunday
3103	ROTA	SAIPAN	13:30	14:00	Monday To Friday
3104	ROTA	SAIPAN	16:30	17:00	Daily
ROTA TO GUAM					
FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3401	ROTA	GUAM	11:30	12:00	Monday To Friday
GUAM TO ROTA					
FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
4301	GUAM	ROTA	12:30	13:00	Monday To Friday
SAIPAN TO TINIAN					
FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1201	SAIPAN	TINIAN	7:30	7:45	Daily
1202	SAIPAN	TINIAN	8:00	8:15	Daily
1203	SAIPAN	TINIAN	9:00	9:15	Daily
1204	SAIPAN	TINIAN	10:00	10:15	Daily
1206	SAIPAN	TINIAN	15:00	15:15	Daily
1207	SAIPAN	TINIAN	16:00	16:15	Daily
1208	SAIPAN	TINIAN	17:00	17:15	Daily
TINIAN TO SAIPAN					
FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
2101	TINIAN	SAIPAN	8:00	8:15	Daily
2102	TINIAN	SAIPAN	8:30	8:45	Daily
2103	TINIAN	SAIPAN	9:30	9:45	Daily
2104	TINIAN	SAIPAN	10:30	10:45	Daily
2106	TINIAN	SAIPAN	15:30	15:45	Daily
2107	TINIAN	SAIPAN	16:30	16:45	Daily
2108	TINIAN	SAIPAN	17:30	17:45	Daily

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Business

PHR Ken Micronesia names Yanagisawa, Ferguson to top posts

TUMON, Guam—P.H.R. Ken Micronesia, Inc. announced the promotion of two of its long-standing Guam executives to lead the Guam operations beginning Jan. 1, 2024, when outgoing president Mitsuo “Mike” Sato takes on a new role with Ken Corporation (Ken Corp.) in Japan after leading P.H.R. Ken Micronesia, Inc. for seven years.



Ferguson

Ken Yanagisawa has been named the new president of P.H.R. Ken Micronesia, Inc., and Ben Ferguson will assume the role of vice president.

Yanagisawa, previously the senior managing director of PHR Ken Micronesia Inc., will retain his multiple titles within

Ken Corp.—general manager of The Tsubaki Tower, president of PHR Management Inc., and executive managing director of Ken Hotels & Resorts Holdings Ltd. He has also held various executive positions in other group hotels within the company for the past 20 years.

P.H.R. Ken Micronesia, Inc. was founded in 2007 as P.H.R. Ken

Asset Management Inc., a subsidiary of and the managing company for the property holdings of Ken Corp. in Guam and Saipan, includes the RIHGA Royal Laguna Guam Resort, Hilton Guam Resort and Spa, Pacific Is-



Yanagisawa

lands Club Guam, Hyatt Regency Guam, Hotel Nikko Guam, The Tsubaki Tower, Aqua Resort Club Saipan, Country Club of the Pacific, and others. Collectively, Ken Micronesia, Inc. is the largest private employer in Guam.

Ken Hotels and Resorts Holdings Ltd. vice president Tetsuya Yamashita said, “We are proud and fortunate to have Mr. Yanagisawa and Mr. Ferguson step into these roles in our Guam operation as Mr. Sato takes on a new role with Ken Corp. They are a formidable team and have been the strength behind the development and management of our operations in Guam for decades. Over the years, they helped us navigate through the highs and lows of the industry resulting from changes

in the economy, natural disasters, and the pandemic. We have the utmost confidence that their leadership will seamlessly take P.H.R. Ken Micronesia into its new era.”

Yanagisawa said, “We thank Mr. Sato for his leadership and guidance. Mr. Sato supported us through our expansion in the region, the construction of The Tsubaki Tower, and various recovery efforts. We look forward to continuing his good work and are committed to investing in Guam’s future.”

Ferguson, who has been with the Pacific Islands Club Guam for 32 years and served as the resort’s general manager for the past eight years, added, “I am honored to accept this position that will closely support our new company president and our P.H.R.

group of companies. We are committed to the success of Guam’s tourism industry, and our work centers on rebuilding the industry and attracting more visitors to Guam.”

Ferguson is a 37-year vet-

eran of the hospitality industry and has called Guam home since 1989. In addition to his current role with PIC Guam, he also served as a senior managing director for P.H.R. Ken Micronesia, Inc. (PR)

Busiest holiday travel season in years off to smooth start with few airport delays

NEW YORK (AP)—The holiday travel rush hit its peak Friday as mild weather and lower flight cancellation rates raised hopes for merrier drivers and airline passengers than last year.

U.S. airlines are predicting a blockbuster holiday season and have projected confidence they can handle the crowds after hiring thousands of pilots, flight attendants and other workers, seeking to avoid the delays and suspensions that marred travel last year and culminated with the Southwest Airline debacle that stranded more than 2 million people.

Airlines have canceled just 1.2% of U.S. flights so far this year, the lowest in five years, but bad weather is always a threat. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg has warned the government will be holding the airlines accountable to operate smoothly and treat passengers well if there are disruptions. Earlier this week, Transportation Department announced a settlement in which Southwest will pay \$140 million for its meltdown last year.

Some 70 flights had been cancelled in the U.S. by early Friday evening and about 3,480 had been delayed, according to FlightAware.

The Transportation Security Administration screened more than 2.6 million passengers on Thursday, which had been projected to be one of the busiest travel days, along with Friday and New Year’s Day. That’s short of the record 2.9 million that agents screened on the Sunday after Thanksgiving, since travel tends to be more spread over Christmas and New Year’s.

Travel has been strong this year—surpassing pre-pandemic levels—even though many Americans say they are worried about the economy. The TSA has already screened 12.3% more travelers than it had by this time last year and 1.4% more than in 2019.

Robert Lake said he hoped taking a pre-dawn flight from Atlanta International Airport would help him beat the crowds Friday but found the world’s busiest airport was already packed in the wee hours.

“It was very hectic. I got to my boarding area, like,

maybe just minutes before the plane took off,” Lake said after arriving in Tampa to go to a cruise for the holidays. “I cut it way too close.”

Other travelers said they were pleasantly surprised at the ease of their trips despite the crowds.

“Super easy. We had a great flight. No issues so far,” said Kendall Black, who flew from Houston to Chicago O’Hare International Airport with her spouse and 3-year-old daughter to visit her sister.

Auto club AAA forecasts that 115 million people in the U.S. will go 50 miles or more from home between Saturday and New Year’s Day. That’s up 2% over last year. The busiest days on the road will be Saturday and next Thursday, Dec. 28, according to transportation data provider INRIX.

Inflation has cooled off a bit, and travelers were helped by lower average gas prices and air fares.

The nationwide gas price average Friday was \$3.13 a gallon, down 15 cents from a month ago and about 3 cents more than this time last year, according to AAA. Average fares in October were 13% lower than a year earlier, according to the government’s latest data.

Internationally, air travel has also rebounded, though it remains below pre-pandemic levels.

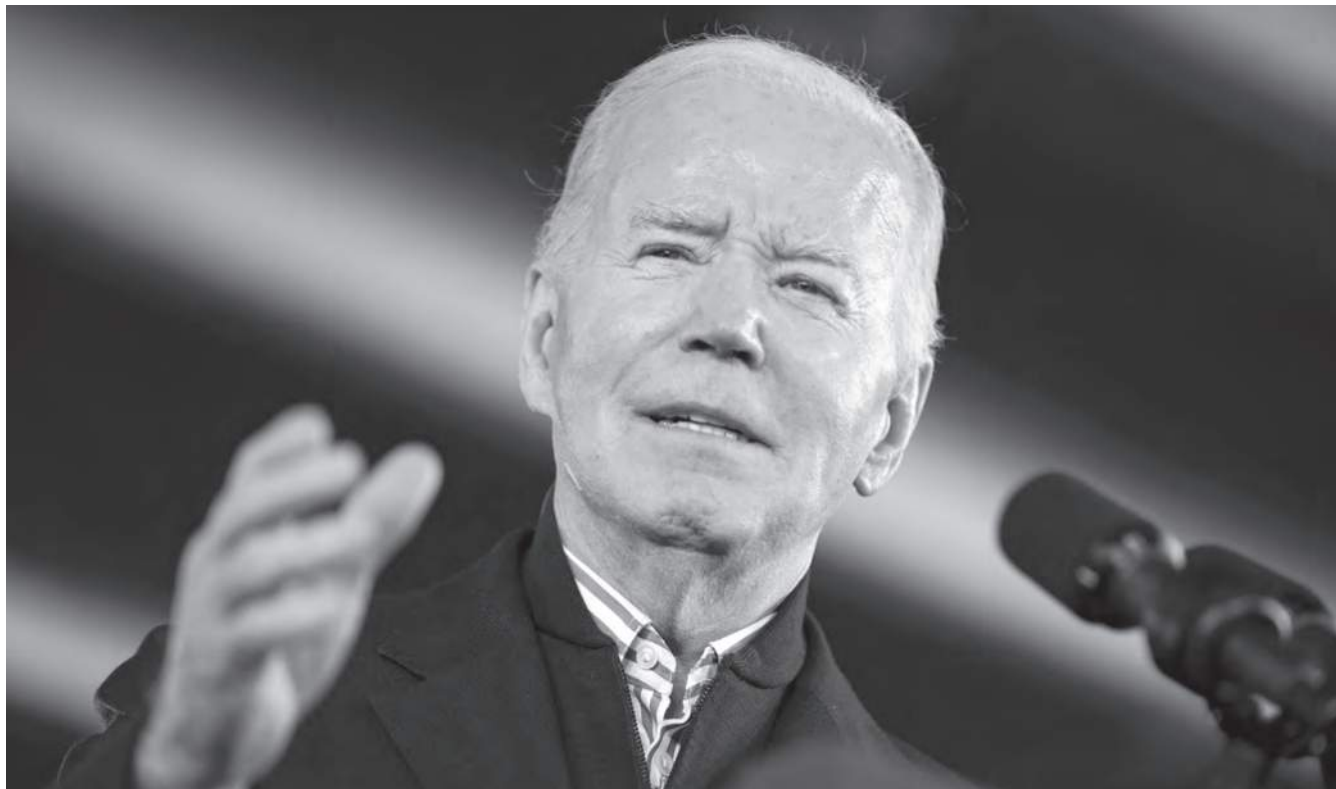
Airlines have sold 31% more tickets for international arrivals to global destinations between Dec. 21 and Dec. 31 compared to the similar period last year, according to travel data firm ForwardKeys.

Some travelers in northern Europe had a run of bad luck with bad weather and labor unrest.

A storm brought heavy rain and strong winds across northern Europe overnight and into Friday, bringing down trees and prompting warnings of flooding on the North Sea coast.

Workers at the undersea tunnel between Britain and France held a surprise strike on Thursday, forcing the cancellation of passenger and vehicle-carrying service before an agreement with unions was reached.

Biden signs EO that targets financial facilitators of Russian defense industry



AP

President Joe Biden speaks about his economic agenda at the Wisconsin Black Chamber of Commerce, Wednesday, Dec. 20, 2023, in Milwaukee.

WASHINGTON (AP)—President Joe Biden signed an executive order Friday giving the U.S. Treasury Department the authority to target financial institutions that facilitate Russia’s efforts to bolster its defense industry.

The new sanctions authority is meant to gum up the Kremlin’s push to restock the Russian military’s depleted arsenal after nearly 22 months of fighting in Ukraine. Russia has already lost over 13,000 pieces of equipment, including tanks, drones and missile systems, according to a U.S. assessment.

The order also seeks to tighten existing restrictions on diamonds and seafood imported from Russia after a

review by U.S. agencies.

“We expect financial institutions will undertake every effort to ensure that they are not witting or unwitting facilitators of circumvention and evasion,” Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said in a statement announcing the order. “And we will not hesitate to use the new tools provided by this authority to take decisive, and surgical, action against financial institutions that facilitate the supply of Russia’s war machine.”

The latest effort to tighten pressure on Russia comes just weeks after Biden and G-7 leaders met virtually to discuss support for Ukraine as rancor spreads in Washington over the cost of backing Kyiv in a

war that has no end in sight.

The White House has been locked in talks with key lawmakers to approve more money for Ukraine. Biden has proposed \$110 billion package of wartime aid for Ukraine, Israel and other national security priorities. GOP lawmakers have declined to approve the money until the White House agrees to major immigration and U.S.-Mexico border policy changes. The Defense Department says it has nearly run out of available funds for supporting Ukraine’s defense.

The G-7 leaders said in a statement following the Dec. 6 meeting that they would work to curtail Russia’s use of the international financial system to further its war in

Ukraine and target “Russian military procurement networks and those who help Russia acquire machine tools, equipment and key inputs.”

Russian defense spending rose by almost 75% in the first half of 2023, and Russia is on track for record military spending next year.

“This executive order comes at a critical juncture,” Deputy Treasury Secretary Wally Adeyemo wrote in a Financial Times op-ed published Friday. “By raising the stakes for banks supporting sensitive trade with Russia and continuing to sanction new front companies and procurement networks, our coalition is pouring sand into the gears of Russia’s military logistics.”

Nation

Trump lawyers press immunity claims before the lower court

WASHINGTON (AP)—Donald Trump was acting within his role as president when he pressed claims about “alleged fraud and irregularity” in the 2020 election, his lawyers told a federal appeals court in arguing that he is immune from prosecution.

The attorneys also asserted in a filing late Saturday night that the “historical fallout is tremendous” from the four-count indictment charging Trump with plotting to overturn the election he lost to Democrat Joe Biden.

No other former president has ever been indicted; Trump has been indicted four times, in both state and federal court, as he campaigns to reclaim the White House.

“The indictment of President Trump threatens to launch cycles of recrimination and politically motivated prosecution that will plague our Nation for many decades to come and stands likely to shatter the very bedrock of our Republic—the confidence of American citizens in an independent judicial system,” the attorneys wrote in a brief filed with the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit.

At issue before the court, which has set arguments for Jan. 9, is whether Trump is immune from prosecution for

what defense lawyers say are official acts that fell within the outer perimeter of a president’s duties and responsibilities.

U.S. District Judge Tanya Chutkan earlier this month rejected that argument, siding with prosecutors from special counsel Jack Smith’s team and declaring that the office of the presidency “does not confer a lifelong ‘get-out-of-jail-free’ pass.”

The appeals court’s role in the dispute is center stage after the Supreme Court on Friday rejected a request from Smith to fast-track a decision on the immunity question. After Trump appealed Chutkan’s order, Smith urged swift intervention from the high court in an effort to get a speedy decision that could keep the case on track for a trial scheduled to start on March 4.

But with that request denied, the two sides are advancing their arguments before the appeals court, where a three-judge panel will decide as early as next month whether to affirm or overrule Chutkan’s decision.

In their latest filing, Trump’s lawyers say that all of the acts Trump is accused of—including urging the Justice Department to investigate claims of voter fraud and telling state election officials that he believed the contests had been tainted by

irregularities—are “quintessential” presidential acts that protect him from prosecution.

“They all reflect President Trump’s efforts and duties, squarely as Chief Executive of the United States, to advocate for and defend the integrity of the federal election, in accord with his view that it was tainted by fraud and irregularity,” they said.

They also contend that, under the Constitution, he cannot be criminally prosecuted for conduct for which he was already impeached, but then acquitted, by Congress.

Federal prosecutors, by contrast, say Trump broke the law after the election by scheming to disrupt the Jan. 6, 2021, counting of electoral votes, including by pressing then-Vice President Mike Pence to not certify the results and by participating in a plot to organize slates of fake electors in battleground states won by Biden who would falsely attest that Trump had actually won those states.

Though Trump’s lawyers have suggested that he had a good faith basis to be concerned that fraud had affected the election, courts around the country and Trump’s own attorney general and other government officials have found no evidence that that was the case.

As conflicts rage abroad, a fractured Congress tries to rally support for historic global challenges

WASHINGTON (AP)—As the Senate wrapped up its work for the year, Sen. Michael Bennet took to the floor of the nearly empty chamber and made a late-night plea for Congress to redouble support for Ukraine: “Understand the stakes at this moment.”

It was the third time in recent months the Colorado Democrat has kept the Senate working late by holding up unrelated legislation in a bid to cajole lawmakers to approve tens of billions of dollars in weaponry and economic aid for Ukraine. During a nearly hour-long, emotional speech, he called on senators to see the nearly 2-year-old conflict as a defining clash of authoritarianism against democracy and implored them to consider what it means “to be fighting on that freezing front line and not know whether we’re going to come through with the ammunition.”

Yet Congress broke for the holidays and is not expected to return for two weeks while continued aid for Ukraine has near-

ly been exhausted. The Biden administration is planning to send one more aid package before the new year, but says it will be the last unless Congress approves more money.

With support slipping in Congress even as conflicts and unrest rattle global security, the United States is once again struggling to assert its role in the world. Under the influence of Donald Trump, the former president who is now the Republican Party front-runner, GOP lawmakers have increasingly taken a skeptical stance toward U.S. involvement abroad, particularly when it comes to aid to Ukraine.

Leaders of traditional allies Britain and France have implored Western nations to continue their robust support, but Russia’s President Vladimir Putin is emboldened and building up resources for a fresh effort as the war heads towards its third year.

Ukraine’s lifelines to the West are also imperiled in the European Union, which sent 1.5 billion euros (\$1.6 billion)

each month to ensure macro-economic stability, pay wages and pensions, keep hospitals and schools running, provide shelter for displaced people and rebuild infrastructure destroyed in the war.

That package has now expired and the EU’s executive branch failed to produce another one for the new year when Hungary vetoed a 50 billion euro (\$55 billion) package this month.

Bolstering Ukraine’s defense used to be celebrated in the U.S. Capitol as one of a few remaining bipartisan causes. But now the fate of roughly \$61 billion in funding is tied to delicate policy negotiations on Capitol Hill over border and immigration changes. And in the last year, lawmakers have had to mount painstaking, round-the-clock efforts to pass even legislation that maintains basic functions of the U.S. government. Bills with ambitious changes have been almost completely out of reach for the closely divided Congress.

World

At least 68 killed in airstrike in Gaza



DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza (AP) — At least 68 people were killed by an Israeli strike in central Gaza, health officials said Sunday, while the number of Israeli soldiers killed in combat over the weekend rose to 17.

Associated Press journalists at a nearby hospital watched frantic Palestinians carry the dead, including a baby, and wounded following the strike on the Maghazi refugee camp east of Deir al-Balah. One bloodied young girl looked stunned while her body was checked for broken bones.

The 68 fatalities include at least 12 women and seven children, according to early hospital figures.

“We were all targeted,” said Ahmad Turkmani, who lost several family members including his daughter and grandson. “There is no safe place in Gaza anyway.”

Earlier, the Health Ministry in Gaza gave the death toll as 70. The Israeli military had no immediate comment.

As Christmas Eve fell, smoke rose over the besieged

territory, while in the West Bank Bethlehem was hushed, its holiday celebrations called off. In neighboring Egypt, tentative efforts continued on a deal for another exchange of hostages for Palestinians held by Israel.

The war has devastated parts of Gaza, killed roughly 20,400 Palestinians and displaced almost all of the territory’s 2.3 million people.

The mounting death toll among Israeli troops—156 since the ground offensive began—could erode public support for the war, which was sparked when Hamas-led militants stormed communities in southern Israel on Oct. 7, killing 1,200 and taking 240 hostage.

Israelis still largely stand behind the country’s stated goals of crushing Hamas’ governing and military capabilities and releasing the remaining 129 captives. That’s despite rising international pressure against Israel’s offensive, and the soaring death toll and unprecedented suffering among Palestinians.

“The war exacts a very heavy price from us, but we have no choice but to continue fighting,” Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said.

In a nationally televised speech, Israeli President Isaac Herzog appealed for the country to remain united. “This moment is a test. We will not break nor blink,” he said.

There has been widespread anger against his government, which many criticize for failing to protect civilians on Oct. 7 and promoting policies that allowed Hamas to gain strength over the years. Netanyahu has avoided accepting responsibility for the military and policy failures.

“Over time, the public will find it hard to ignore the heavy price paid, as well as the suspicion that the aims that were loudly heralded are still far from being attained, and that Hamas is showing no signs of capitulating in the near future,” wrote Amos Harel, military affairs commentator for the Haaretz newspaper.

Death toll from China earthquake rises to 149, with two still missing

BEIJING (AP)—The death toll from China’s most powerful earthquake in years has risen to 149, with two people still missing after the tremor hit northwestern parts of the country last week.

The 6.2-magnitude quake struck a remote mountainous area between Gansu and Qinghai provinces on Dec. 18, reducing homes to rubble and triggering heavy mudslides that inundated two villages in Qinghai province.

State broadcaster CCTV said Monday the death toll in Donghai city in Qinghai has risen by one, to 32, and rescuers were still searching for two missing people. In neighboring Gansu, authorities had

reported 117 dead.

Nearly 1,000 were injured and more than 14,000 homes were destroyed in China’s deadliest earthquake in nine years.

Primary schools in Jishihang county in Gansu resumed classes in tents on Monday, state media reported. Local authorities said they would use the upcoming winter break to repair damaged schools and erect temporary structures so that classes could resume as normal in the spring semester.

Authorities also rushed to erect temporary housing units for survivors facing temperatures well below freezing. CGTN, the state broadcaster’s

international arm, said the first batch of 500 temporary housing units had been built for residents in Meipo, a village in Gansu, on Friday night.

More than 87,000 people have been resettled after the quake.

The tremor caused economic losses estimated to be worth tens of millions of dollars in the agricultural and fisheries industries, according to state media.

Chinese Premier Li Qiang on Saturday visited several villages in Gansu and a county in Qinghai and urged authorities to improve living conditions for the survivors, the official Xinhua News Agency reported.

Li said the top priority of relief efforts was to make sure people stay warm and safe in winter.

Overdrive

'23 Ram 1500 Rebel G/T: Ready for rough stuff, same great ride on-road

By **BARRY SPYKER**
Tribune News Service

It's easy to be drawn into the sporty Rebel G/T, a rugged off-road version of the Ram 1500 full-size pickup. The temptation is nearly impossible to resist with a 5.7-liter V-8 Hemi, bulging performance hood, black grille, beefy 33-inch tires and oversize black wheel flares.

And it's rugged-ready with 9.2 inches of ground clearance, underbody skid plates just in case, and electronically locking rear differential. Inside, performance pages measure g-force, vehicle dynamics and 0-60 mph times.

Problem is, no one wants to give up the amazing ride quality that made the Ram 1500 a top-rated pickup truck since this generation began in 2019. Well, worry not. Even in rugged form with all-terrain tires, the Rebel 4x4 has a surprisingly gentle ride on asphalt, too.

Credit an available four-corner air-suspension system that tames rough patches for a smoother ride. Adjustable ride height (raising ground clearance to 10.7 inches) improves off-road performance, fuel efficiency on the highway, and makes it easier to load and unload from the cargo bed.

The Rebel also holds its own inside, living up to the 1500's reputation for comfort and quality. Upmarket materials and plush padding make it feel more like a high-end sedan than a truck.

The 2023 Ram 1500 has three drivetrains (the EcoDiesel departs after this year) but only the best for a Rebel: the iconic Hemi, which gets 395 horsepower and 410 pound-feet of torque. Plus, there's an optional 48-volt hybrid system to improve fuel economy and add a quick kick.



STELLANTIS

The 2023 Ram 1500 Rebel G/T has a 5.7-liter V-8 Hemi that puts out 395 horsepower and 410 pound-feet of torque.

Mated to a smooth-shifting 8-speed automatic transmission, the Rebel charges to 60 mph in 5.9 seconds. The performance hood adds built-in air flow to help keep the engine temp down under harsh conditions.

The beast can tow up to 12,750 pounds, which beats all the competition save the mighty Ford F-150 which surpasses 3,000 pounds. Trailer sway control is standard but a trailer brake controller is an extra \$295. Payload capacity is rated at 2,320 pounds.

On the road, the Rebel rumbles on throttle but quiets down under way. Steering is firm and responsive; the Rebel is no sports car but offers above-average handling for a big truck.

The 4x4 can tackle the rough territory, from gravel trails to rocky hills. Aided by low-speed cruise control, it has an approach angle of 18

degrees, a 19-degree breaker angle, and departure angle of 25.1 degrees. Its armor includes skid plates for the front suspension, transfer case and fuel tank. And it's equipped with tow hooks.

With the mild-hybrid option, the V-8 Rebel manages an EPA-estimated 18 mpg in

town, 22 highway, for a combined of 19 mpg.

Access to the Ram's cargo bed is eased with an automatic tailgate release; An optional tailgate can swing downward or open outward from the center like twin doors. Another helpful option is the RamBox storage bins (\$995), built into the side of

the bed for tools and such.

Add a Bed Utility Group (\$450) for deployable steps for easier reach and entry into the bed, and four adjustable tie-down hooks and tri-fold tonneau cover.

Getting inside the raised Rebel takes a hoist without available running boards or nerf bars, but there are thick grab handles front and rear and the doors open wide. Inside is a roomy, comfortable cabin accented with leather seats, wood accents and a twin-pane sunroof. But be aware that much of the good stuff comes in options packages.

One package has G/T logos on the front-seat backs and 12-way power and 4-way lumbar adjustment for both driver and passenger, so you'll want to holler shotgun. Head, shoulder and legroom is exceptional throughout — the rear seat offers a best-in-class 45.2 inches

of leg room. The heated/ventilated rear seats also recline a bit.

For the driver this year is a 12-inch digital display that is reconfigurable to include a ton of data. Multiple menus and a choice of five windows offer at-a-glance info. Instruments can be configured in analog or digital form.

The steering wheel is heated, tilts and telescopes and has paddle shifters for the control-hungry. Above, a digital rear-view mirror looks beyond any obstructive cargo. Pedals are power-adjustable.

A gorgeous 12-inch vertical touchscreen houses Ram's superb UConnect system, depicting a large navigation map, sharp icons and graphics; Performance pages monitor engine data and vehicle dynamics. The system connects with travel and traffic services, and is compatible with Apple CarPlay and Android Auto. A premium Harman Kardon system gets nine speakers and a subwoofer.

Like the interior goodies, much of the active-safety tech comes in optional packages. An advanced safety group includes adaptive cruise control with stop-and-go, lane-keep assist, head-up display, 360-degree camera, emergency front braking, and parallel and perpendicular park assist.

Rebel's plenty tough but, for those looking for something even more menacing, there's the Ram 1500 TRX. It has more power with 702 horses and 650 pound-feet of torque, and hits 60 mpg in just 4.5 seconds. The TRX is the one to challenge Ford's Raptor for global monster-truck dominance.

For the rest of us, the Rebel G/T can play rough enough and give the family a comfy ride to dinner or Sea World.

NUTS & BOLTS

- **Base Price:** \$55,285
- **As tested:** \$74,800 (Options include 5.7-liter V-8 Hemi, Technology Group, Bed Utility Group, Night Edition with 8-way power seats, G/T Package, Rebel Level 2 Equipment Group with remote start and park assist, air suspension, dual-pane sunroof)
- **What's all the excitement about?** Off-road prowess with on-road comfort and handling, aided by air suspension

- **Powertrain:** 5.7-liter V-8 Hemi puts out 395 hp, 410 pound-feet of torque; optional link to 48-volt motor; mated to 8-speed automatic transmission
- **How's the performance?** With 33-inch all-terrain tires and underbody skid plates, it's highly capable at climbing rocky hills, but retains the ride quality of a Ram 1500.
- **Fuel economy:** EPA-estimated 18 mpg city, 22 highway, 19 combined

2024 Mazda CX-90 is icing on the cake

By **MARC D. GRASSO**
Boston Herald

You know when a house on the block gets a new car, neighbors either attempt to keep up with the Jones' and buy a new car as well, or they think, wow, that is really really nice; why didn't I think of that?

Well, the all new 2024 Mazda CX-90 is just that, and what a beauty it is. Let's start with the exterior, the styling is superb with its extended front nose and widened shark line grille, the CX-90 shows off both luxury in style, while the Mazda color options are what keeps consumers interested in what Mazda has to

NUTS & BOLTS

- **MPG:** 23 city / 28 highway / 26.2 as tested
- **As Tested:** \$61,920

offer. Our black cherry looking Artisan Red Metallic was unfathomable; what a color.

On the interior, hang on to your hardhat, did Mazda get luxurious on us? Well in the 2024 CX-90, they sure did. As Car & Driver mentions in their most recent analysis of third-row SUVs, the Mazda CX-90 topped the chart in driver comfort, 2nd-row comfort, interior styling, and an array

of powertrain and chassis accolades. That is very impressive and proves that Mazda is not only on their way to the luxury market, but beating the Grand Cherokee, Pilot, Telluride and Grand Highlander in their analysis. Our interior was Tan Napa Leather, which was a lighter brown than I would have expected, but it was still comfortable and inviting.

Powering the Mazda CX-90 is the newly released Inline 6-cylinder 3.3L Turbo SKY-ACTIV engine producing 340 horsepower and 369 pound-feet of torque on premium fuel. The new engine got up to speed



MAZDA

The standard 2024 Mazda CX-90 Turbo has a 48-volt mild hybrid system with a 3.3-liter inline six-cylinder engine that generates 280 horsepower.

nicely with minimal lag and was quiet for the interior passengers. With a base CX-90 starting at under \$40K, it truly is

a great family SUV option.

In my auto reviews, I try to say what others won't say, but for this review, I will say the

Mazda was a great vehicle to drive and enjoy, while the curvatures, body styling and interior were exceptional. Would I say that it is a luxury vehicle in the luxury market? That suggests BMW, Mercedes and others, so no. But I think for the price, it compares with Jeep, Volvo, Acura and the like, so let's call it mid-priced luxury. I also want to thank everyone who has reached out directly to me to ask for input on their prospective car purchases. I hope that you have found success in today's crazy car market and that you are enjoying those new vehicles for miles to come. If you haven't reached out, email me: marc.grasso@bostonherald.com.

Life & Style

On weekend before Christmas, ‘Aquaman’ sequel drifts to first

By LINDSEY BAHR
AP FILM WRITER

"Aquaman and the Lost Kingdom " led a crowd of new releases at the box office on the weekend before Christmas Monday. The DC and Warner Bros. superhero sequel starring Jason Momoa earned an estimated \$28.1 million in its first three days of release in 3,706 locations in North America, according to studio estimates Sunday. By Monday it is projected to have around \$40 million in domestic ticket sales.

Despite many new offerings—including the fam-



WARNER BROS. PICTURES VIA AP
This image released by Warner Bros. Pictures shows Jason Momoa in a scene from "Aquaman and the Lost Kingdom."

ily friendly animated film " Migration," the R-rated romantic comedy "Anyone But You," the wrestling tragedy " The Iron Claw " and a ghostly tearjerker in " All of Us Strangers "—this will go down as a quieter pre-holiday frame at the box office. Moviegoing audiences perhaps just had other priorities than going to the cinema.

It is never great for Hollywood or theaters when Christmas Eve falls on a prime weekend day, but the last time Christmas was on a Monday, in 2017, "Star Wars: The Last

Jedi" dominated the four-day charts with \$71.5 million from its second weekend.

On Christmas Day, which often brings big crowds back to the theaters, they'll be joined by more new films, including the big budget musical adaptation of " The Color Purple," Michael Mann's racing film " Ferrari " and George Clooney's adaptation of the rowing drama " The Boys in the Boat." All should get a boost between Christmas and New Years, too, a traditionally lucrative time for movie theaters.

But none will compare some of the biggest holiday earners, like "Star Wars: The Force Awakens," "Avatar" and "Spider-Man: No Way Home." It was not lost on social media that this was the weekend that Patty Jenkins' Star Wars movie "Rogue Squadron" was supposed to come out.

"Seven openers in the course of four days is unusual," said Paul Dergarabedian, the senior media analyst for Comscore.

"Aquaman and the Lost Kingdom" is estimated to have cost around \$200 million to produce.

SHOWBIZ TIDBITS

Vin Diesel accused of sexual battery by former assistant in lawsuit

LOS ANGELES (AP)—"Fast and Furious" star Vin Diesel has been accused by his former assistant of sexual battery while working for him in 2010. Asta Jonasson filed a lawsuit in Los Angeles on Thursday alleging that Diesel forced himself onto her in a hotel suite in Atlanta. The lawsuit alleges she tried to escape from the room after being forced into Diesel's bed, but the actor moved toward her then groped her breasts and kissed her chest. Diesel attempted to pull down her underwear, causing her to scream as she ran toward the nearby bathroom. He eventually forced her to touch his erect penis and began to masturbate, the suit says. The lawsuit said Jonasson closed her eyes in fear of angering Diesel any further and wished the assault would end. Jonasson was fired hours later by Diesel's sister Samantha Vincent, who is also the president of his One Race Productions.

Comedian Jo Koy is picked to host the Golden Globes as award season kicks off

NEW YORK (AP)—Comedian and actor Jo Koy has been tapped to host the Golden Globes, picked by producers for his "infectious energy and relatable humor." Koy last year saw his "Easter Sunday" become the first big studio movie with an all-Filipino ensemble. He has released five stand-up specials on Comedy Central and Netflix, including his most recent Netflix special, "Live From The Los Angeles Forum." The Globes are recovering after scandal and several troubled years, including one without a broadcast. The show will take place on Jan. 7 and will mark Koy's first major award show hosting gig. "We are thrilled to have Jo host the 81st Annual Golden Globe Awards and bring his infectious energy and relatable humor to kick off Hollywood's award season," said Helen Hoehne, Golden

Globes president, in a statement Thursday. "We know Jo is bringing his A-game."

Federal court revives lawsuit against Nirvana over 1991 'Nevermind' naked baby album cover

LOS ANGELES (AP)—A federal appeals court on Thursday revived a child sexual exploitation lawsuit filed by the man who appeared naked as a 4-month-old on the cover of Nirvana's 1991 album "Nevermind." Spencer Elden's lawsuit against the grunge rock group alleges that he has suffered "permanent harm" as the band and others profited from the image of him underwater in a swimming pool, appearing to grab for a dollar bill on a fish hook. The suit says the image violated federal laws on child sexual abuse material, although no criminal charges were ever sought. A federal judge in California threw out the lawsuit last year but allowed Elden to file a revised version, which the judge later

dismissed on grounds that it was outside the 10-year statute of limitations of one of the laws used as a cause of action.

Charlie Sheen's neighbor arrested after being accused of assaulting actor in Malibu home

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Charlie Sheen's neighbor was arrested after being accused of assaulting the actor in a Malibu, California, home this week, authorities said. Electra Schrock was arrested for assault with a deadly weapon, the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department said in a statement Friday. She was also taken into custody for force likely to create bodily injury and burglary. Authorities arrived at the residence Wednesday afternoon after receiving a battery-disturbance call. Schrock, 47, was expected to appear in court Friday. Representatives for Sheen did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

New York governor commutes sentence of rapper G. Dep who had turned self in for cold case killing

NEW YORK (AP)—Rapper Travell "G. Dep" Coleman, who walked into a New York police precinct in 2010 and admitted to committing a nearly two-decade-old cold case murder to clear his conscience, has been granted clemency by Gov. Kathy Hochul. Now 49, Coleman has served 13 of a 15-year-to-life sentence. With his sentence being commuted by the Democratic governor, he will now be allowed to seek parole earlier than his original 2025 date. Coleman is one of 16 individuals granted clemency by Hochul in an announcement made Friday. They include 12 pardons and four commutations. It marked the third time Hochul has granted clemency in 2023. "Through the clemency process, it is my solemn responsibility as governor to recognize the efforts individuals have made to improve their

lives and show that redemption is possible," Hochul said in a written statement.

Second suspect arrested in theft of Banksy stop sign artwork featuring military drones

LONDON (AP)—A second suspect was arrested in the alleged theft of a work by the elusive street artist Banksy of a stop sign adorned with three military drones, London police said Sunday. A man in his 40s was in custody on suspicion of theft and criminal damage, the Metropolitan police said. A suspect in his 20s who was arrested Saturday was released on bail. Witnesses who arrived at a street corner Friday in the south London section of Peckham less than an hour after Banksy posted a photo of the work on Instagram said they were stunned to watch a man with bolt cutters remove the sign as another man steadied a bike he stood on. The incident was captured in photos and video.

Adult son blames mom for everything wrong

DEAR ABBY: I have two sons in their 50s. My older son is kind, attentive and loving. The younger one, "Scott," is problematic. Both my boys were raised the same, although when they were in their early teens, I divorced their alcoholic father. At that point, I had to work three jobs to keep them fed and sheltered.

Scott constantly returns to the past and accuses me of never having time for him. He no longer speaks to me, which happens often and can last for long periods. His wrath is directed solely at me, and he accuses me of turning the rest of the family against him. He's negative and controlling, and the truth is, no one wants to be around him. In addition to posting hurtful things on social media, he now refers to me as the "ice maiden."

A close family member advised me to look up the definition of narcissism, and I was shocked to see the description of this disorder fits Scott perfectly. What I have read and researched about narcissism says "stay away" and only counseling will help. He refuses, saying it would be "too hurtful." Have I lost a son? Is this something I created?

MOM OF A MONSTER

DEAR MOM: Please stop blaming yourself. If you have researched narcissism, you should already know that you didn't cause Scott's problem. Whether the estrangement

is permanent, only time will tell. In the meantime, protect yourself by no longer trying to engage with him, and block his hurtful social media posts. You can't fix what's wrong with your son, and he won't try to fix himself because he's enjoying being the injured party.

■ ■ ■

DEAR ABBY: I have recently been diagnosed with breast cancer. Due to my DNA results, I will have a double mastectomy sometime in the next few months after I finish chemo. I want to celebrate that it was caught early by throwing a "Ta-ta to the Tatas" party complete with crazy wigs, a boob cake and a round of slippery nipple cocktails, a week or so before my surgery.

One of my friends thinks the idea is tacky and she's firmly against it. Abby, she can't even say the word "cancer" aloud; she has to whisper it. Am I wrong? IS it tacky to want to affirm life and flout both fear and death with over-the-top, tacky humor? This kind of humor is how I deal with serious problems. If I can mock the problem, I lessen its power. For me, it's like celebrating Dia de Los Muertos, but in this case, it's my breasts that I'm losing, not my life. What do you think?

PARTY MOOD IN MONTANA

DEAR PARTY MOOD: I think you are a brave and strong woman, clearly much more so than your friend. You are deal-

DEAR ABBY

By Abigail Van Buren
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.



ing with a serious challenge in the healthiest way possible — by facing it head-on. You deserve to be supported by your friends in the months to come, but the woman you have written about is not one of them. She isn't emotionally strong enough to accompany you on this journey. Don't blame her, but DO disinvite her. Bottoms up!

■ ■ ■

To receive a collection of Abby's most memorable — and most frequently requested — poems and essays, send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for \$8 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby — Keepers Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson



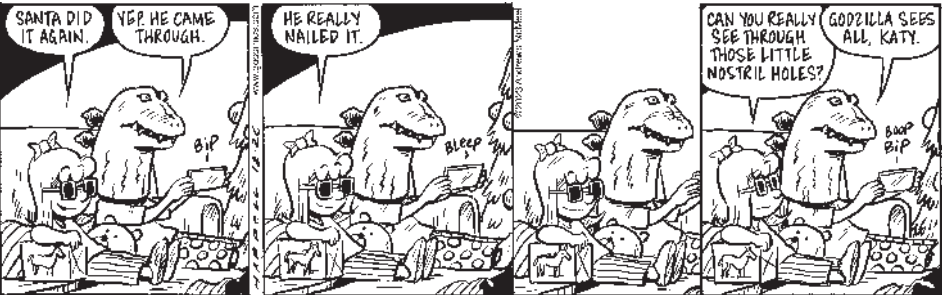
Garfield®

By Jim Davis



Adam@home

By Bryan Basset



The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy



CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Chicago paper, for short

5 "Didn't I tell you?"

8 Teen hangout

12 Ms. Rowlands

13 Like aspirin, briefly

14 "Dies —" (Latin hymn)

15 World-wide (Abbr.)

16 Term paper feature

18 "Downtown Abbey" servant

20 Ancient letters

21 Tax-collecting org.

22 Key lime —

23 Autumn pears

26 Relief for tired tootsies

30 To and —

31 Pioneering ISP

32 911 responder

DOWN

1 End-of-wk. cry

2 Nevada city

3 Division word

4 Sea off Poland

5 Remote locations?

6 Thames town

7 Green prefix

8 Stately dance

9 "East of Eden" twin

10 Tardy

11 Sediment

17 Half a sextet

19 "— Doubtfire"

22 D.C. figure

23 Favorite pal, in texts

24 Acapulco gold

25 — Canals

26 Nemesis

27 Old Olds-mobile

28 Strike caller

29 "Butter" K-pop band

31 Khan title

34 Tooth-paste target

35 Big fusses

36 Saigon soup

37 Snappy reply

39 Debate issue

40 In — (dazed)

41 Only

42 Forum wear

43 Disaster aid gp.

44 Sad

45 Lighten

46 Used henna

48 Light touch

Solution time: 22 mins.

Last Friday's Answer

E	L	O	A	S	T	I	C	R	A	B
P	O	P	G	U	A	C	O	K	L	A
I	C	E	C	A	N	O	E	R	S	O
G	O	I	U	M	N	R	F	F		
P	A	R	I	S	S	U	B	A	E	R
D	I	O	N	J	R	E	C	L	O	T
F	D	A	I	C	I	G	E	E	S	E
S	A	H	I	R	L	P	A	L		
T	O	M	E	R	A	P	I	S	L	L
A	L	E	S		I	C	E	H	O	U
P	E	N	S		K	E	Y	S		O
R	K									

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Chris Daughtry, 44; Jared Leto, 52; Ozzie Smith, 69; John Walsh, 78.

Happy Birthday: Expand your interests, be proactive and start living the life you want to live. The change you can make will lead to stability, promise a better future, improve your spirit and encourage you to step up and do your part. Personal improvements will build confidence and strength of character. Explore the possibilities and put your trust and faith in your ability to get things done. Your numbers are 5, 16, 23, 29, 34, 37, 44.

ARIES (March 21-April 19): Observation will enrich your vision of a situation unfolding in your circle. Time is on your side; watch, evaluate and consider every angle, and you'll get a clear picture of achieving positive results. Use your intelligence and experience to guide you to victory. ★★

TAURUS (April 20-May 20): Don't let anyone talk you into something you don't want. Keep your money, prized possessions and secrets in a safe place. An unexpected change of plans will allow you to meet someone new or broaden your insight into exciting possibilities. Romance is favored. ★★

GEMINI (May 21-June 20): Sit tight and see what happens. You'll have to filter through information and fact-check before you make a move. Avoid getting involved in joint ventures or going on an emotional spending spree. Protect your reputation, money and possessions. Display discipline. ★★

CANCER (June 21-July 22): Emotions will surface. Be careful what you share. Concentrate more on yourself and your needs than trying to change others. Evaluate your health and adjust your fitness routine to achieve strength and energy to carry you to your desired direction. Romance is favored. ★★

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): Challenge yourself. Step up and do something that stimulates your mind and empowers you to take your attributes to the next level. Verify information before you commit to something that interests you. An unexpected change will put you at risk. Act quickly and definitively. ★★

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): Discuss changes and your pursuits with someone you love and respect. The input you receive may not be what you want to hear, but it will offer insight into how to move forward successfully. Personal growth is favored, and romance is in the stars. ★★

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): Start a conversation and see where it leads. Don't be disappointed by those who walk away. Acceptance allows you to regroup and move on without losing momentum. Know your target, and market what you want intelligently. Traveling and communication require precision and planning. ★★

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): Try something new. Expand your interests and imagination. Reset your goals to suit your schedule and budget. Your motivation will kick in once you have a plan, and something good will

transpire. Don't let temptation overpower you, and don't waste time or money frivolously. ★★

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): Stick to the facts and avoid trouble. Don't expect to convince others to do things your way. Traveling and communication are hindered and will require additional time and techniques to wiggle your way through the ups and downs you encounter. ★★

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): Press pause and reminisce. The insight you gain from assessing the past will encourage you to consider how to proceed. It's time to get excited about change and to relinquish anything that may stand between you and the destination you map out. Self-improvement is favored. ★★

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): Consider opinions that differ from yours. Find common ground and discover something you can contribute to and enjoy. A change of heart will help you expand your interests. Be part of the solution, not the problem. ★★

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): Anger and upset won't bring you closer to resolution. Be the one to point out similarities instead of differences. Open your doors, help those less fortunate and use your resources skillfully to ensure everyone you love feels happy to be a part of your circle. ★★

Birthday Baby: You are sensitive, creative and reliable. You are meticulous and compassionate.

★: Avoid conflicts; work behind the scenes. ★★: You can accomplish, but don't rely on others. ★★★: Focus and you'll reach your goals. ★★★★: Aim high; start new projects. ★★★★★: Nothing can stop you; go for gold.

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku By Dave Green

7		1	6		8				
2			1			5		6	
9			4	2		1	7		
4		6	8						
1	8			4	3		6	7	
		9						4	
6	9	2		7		3			
8		4						2	
5			3			6	4		

Difficulty: ★★ 12/26
©2012 Conceptis Puzzles, Dist. by King Features Syndicate, Inc.

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Last Friday's Answer

3	2	1	8	6	9	5	7	4
7	5	9	2	1	4	6	8	3
6	8	4	5	3	7	9	2	1
8	6	3	7	9	5	4	1	2
2	9	5	1	4	3	8	6	7
4	1	7	6	8	2	3	5	9
1	3	2	4	5	8	7	9	6
5	4	6	9	7	1	2	3	8
9	7	8	3	2	6	1	4	5

Difficulty: ★★ 12/26

WONDERWORD By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them. Circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the WONDERWORD.

BOXING DAY IS SUPER BUSY Solution: 5 letters

S	Y	N	W	A	I	T	U	O	D	L	O	S	P	T
C	T	S	R	O	R	E	I	H	S	A	C	R	W	D
O	I	E	X	U	R	D	L	I	W	I	O	E	E	W
U	R	L	K	O	T	K	Z	M	N	M	N	P	S	O
P	U	L	B	C	B	E	A	O	O	T	O	P	I	R
O	C	T	S	U	I	G	R	T	Y	H	U	O	T	C
N	E	U	R	T	P	T	I	S	S	E	E	N	T	R
S	S	O	E	S	C	O	I	B	N	A	N	S	E	R
A	L	K	Y	E	N	X	T	I	E	R	I	R	V	D
V	L	C	L	S	T	P	L	L	L	L	O	D	I	
I	I	E	F	H	I	L	A	E	D	Y	N	O	A	T
N	A	H	R	E	T	S	U	B	R	O	O	D	S	C
G	T	C	C	L	O	T	H	E	S	T	O	R	E	A
S	E	E	G	N	A	H	C	X	E	D	A	R	T	R
P	R	I	C	E	T	A	G	I	F	T	C	A	R	D

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To purchase THE COLLECTED WONDERWORD, Volumes 56 through 76, order on line at www.WonderWordBooks.com. In Canada, call 1-855-232-2367

STUMPED?

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Dolphins' last-second field goal win over Cowboys gives them playoff berth



MIAMI GARDENS, Fla. (AP)—Jason Sanders kicked his fifth field goal

of the game, a 29-yarder as time expired, and the Miami Dolphins secured a playoff berth with a 22-20 victory over the Dallas Cowboys on Sunday.

Tua Tagovailoa threw for 293 yards and a touchdown for the AFC East-leading Dolphins (11-4), who beat a team with a winning record for the first time this season. He connected with Tyreek Hill twice on the decisive drive, which covered 64 yards and took the final 3:27 off the clock.

Hill had nine catches for 99 yards after missing last week's victory over the New York Jets with an ankle injury.

Dak Prescott went 20 of 32 for 253 yards and two touchdowns for the Cowboys (10-5), who have already clinched a playoff spot but fell a half-game behind Philadelphia in the NFC East. Prescott put Dallas in front 20-19 with an 8-yard touchdown pass to a leaping Brandin Cooks in the corner of the end zone.

Sanders' first field goal was a career-long 57-yarder in the first quarter. He added kicks of 52, 54 and 35 yards.

PATRIOTS 26, BRONCOS 23

DENVER (AP)—Chad Ryland made a career-long 56-yard field goal with 2 seconds left, and New England dealt a near-fatal blow to Denver's playoff hopes.

The Patriots (4-11) scored a pair of touchdowns in a 6-second span of the third quarter, then fended off a furious fourth-quarter rally by the Broncos (7-8). Denver now has just a 6% chance of ending an eight-year playoff drought, according to the NFL's calculations.

Ryland's kick capped a seven-play, 44-yard drive that began with 58 seconds left after the Broncos went three-and-out. Denver had tied it up with a pair of long TD drives and 2-point conversions on its previous two possessions.

Ryland missed a 47-yard field goal and an extra point, but the rookie came through at the end.

The Broncos were 7 1/2-point favorites, according to FanDuel Sportsbook, making the Patriots the fourth underdog to win at Empower Field at Mile High in coach Sean Payton's first season.

Bill Belichick improved to 11-10 against the Broncos during his 24-year tenure in New England.

LIONS 30, VIKINGS 24

MINNEAPOLIS (AP)—Detroit clinched its first division title in 30 years, using two rushing touchdowns from Jahmyr



Miami Dolphins place kicker Jason Sanders, right, walks off the field with punter Jake Bailey (16) after an NFL football game against the Dallas Cowboys, Sunday, Dec. 24, 2023, in Miami Gardens.

Gibbs and 106 receiving yards and a third-quarter go-ahead score by Amon-Ra St. Brown to beat injury-plagued Minnesota.

Ifeatu Melifonwu picked off Minnesota's Nick Mullens at the 5-yard line on an off-target pass to an open Justin Jefferson with 49 seconds left to seal the win. Mullens was intercepted four times.

Jared Goff passed for 257 yards without a turnover and David Montgomery had a rushing touchdown for the Lions (11-4). Detroit secured a home playoff game for the first time in 22 seasons at Ford Field, where an NFC North champions banner will soon hang. The last one was for winning the NFC Central in 1993.

Mullens threw for two scores, a diving 26-yard catch by Jefferson with 29 seconds left in the first half and a 6-yard toss to K.J. Osborn that gave the Vikings (7-8) a 21-17 lead early in the third quarter one play after a 47-yard heave to Osborn.

BUCCANEERS 30, JAGUARS 12

TAMPA, Fla. (AP)—Baker Mayfield threw for 283 yards and two touchdowns, and NFC South-leading Tampa Bay won its fourth straight while extending Jacksonville's skid to four games.

Mayfield threw a pair of TD passes as the Buccaneers (8-7) built a 20-0 halftime lead. In both cases, the Bucs cashed in after intercepting Trevor Lawrence, who struggled after spending the past week in the NFL's concussion protocol.

Lawrence threw a second-half TD pass to Calvin Ridley before spending the fourth quarter on the bench with what the Jaguars announced was a shoulder injury.

The Bucs are alone atop their division, one game ahead of New Orleans and Atlanta.

The Jaguars (8-7) remained in a first-place tie atop the AFC South with Indianapolis and Houston because both rivals

also lost on Sunday.

BROWNS 36, TEXANS 22

HOUSTON (AP)—Amari Cooper set a franchise record with 265 yards receiving and scored two touchdowns and a 2-point conversion as Cleveland beat Houston to move closer to a playoff berth.

The Browns (10-5) are all but guaranteed to secure their second postseason appearance since 2002. It's the third time since 1999 that they've reached double-digit wins, doing so in 2007 and 2020.

Joe Flacco threw for 368 yards with three touchdowns and two interceptions in his fourth start for the Browns, who built a 22-7 halftime lead and cruised to their third straight victory.

Cooper broke the Browns record previously held by Josh Gordon, who had 261 yards receiving against Jacksonville on Dec. 1, 2013. Cooper has 1,250 yards receiving, making him the first receiver in team history with consecutive 1,000-yard seasons.

The Texans (8-7) saw their playoff chances diminish. Case Keenum threw for 62 yards with two interceptions in his second start in place of star rookie C.J. Stroud, who remains out with a concussion. Keenum was replaced by Davis Mills late in the third quarter.

SEAHAWKS 20, TITANS 17

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP)—Geno Smith threw his second touchdown pass of the fourth quarter, a 5-yarder to Colby Parkinson with 57 seconds left, and Seattle beat Tennessee to remain in playoff contention.

The Seahawks (8-7) have won two straight but still need to win out and get some help to clinch their second playoff berth in three seasons. The Titans (5-10) lost consecutive games for the third time this season.

Smith, who missed the past

two games with an injured groin, gave the Seahawks their first lead at 13-10 when he found DK Metcalf in the left corner for an 11-yard TD with 12:10 left.

Derrick Henry put Tennessee back up 17-13 with a 2-yard TD run with 3:21 left.

Smith responded by driving the Seahawks 75 yards over 14 plays for the decisive score.

FALCONS 29, COLTS 10

ATLANTA (AP)—Taylor Heinicke provided turnover-free leadership at quarterback, passing for 229 yards and a touchdown to lead Atlanta past Indianapolis.

The Falcons (7-8) benched Desmond Ridder this week for the second time this season following two straight losses. Heinicke delivered, completing 23 of 33 passes, including a 24-yard touchdown pass to Kyle Pitts. Tyler Allgeier added a 31-yard touchdown run. The Falcons set a season high in scoring.

The Colts (8-7), who had won five of six, struggled offensively after opening the game with a long drive capped by Jonathan Taylor's 1-yard scoring run. Gardner Minshew for 201 yards and was intercepted by Jessie Bates in the fourth quarter.

Younghoe Koo kicked five field goals for Atlanta.

PACKERS 33, PANTHERS 30

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP)—Jordan Love threw for two touchdowns, ran for one and made two big completions to set up Anders Carlson's 32-yard field goal with 19 seconds left, and Green Bay survived a fourth-quarter rally by Carolina.

Love threw touchdown passes of 21 yards to rookie Don-tayvion Wicks and 5 yards to Romeo Dobbs and scored on a quarterback sneak as the Packers snapped a two-game losing streak. Aaron Jones became the first Packers player this season to exceed 100 yards rushing or

receiving in a game, rushing for 127 yards on 21 carries.

The Packers (7-8) remain one game behind the Seattle Seahawks and Los Angeles Rams in the NFC wild-card race.

Bryce Young threw for a career-high 312 yards with two touchdown passes to DJ Chark for the Panthers (2-13). Carolina trailed 30-16 in the fourth quarter before rallying to tie the game, but Love came through for Green Bay in the closing minutes.

JETS 33, COMMANDERS 30

EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J. (AP)—Greg Zuerlein kicked a 54-yard field goal with 5 seconds left, and New York beat Washington after blowing a 20-point, third-quarter lead.

Jacoby Brissett replaced the benched Sam Howell in the third quarter and led the Commanders on three straight touchdown drives, including Antonio Gibson's 2-yard run that put Washington ahead 28-27 with 4:52 remaining.

The Jets (6-9) got the ball back with 1:41 remaining, and Trevor Siemian marched New York into range for Zuerlein's kick. It was the second win in eight games for the Jets.

Siemian finished 27 of 49 for 217 yards with a touchdown pass and an interception in his first start in place of the injured Zach Wilson. Breece Hall ran for 95 yards and two TDs and caught 12 passes for 96 yards.

BEARS 27, CARDINALS 16

CHICAGO (AP)—Justin Fields threw for a touchdown and ran for a score, and Chicago beat Arizona.

Tight end Cole Kmet caught four passes for a career-high 107 yards despite missing the second half because of a knee injury.

Khalil Herbert ran for a season-high 112 yards and a touchdown, and the Bears (6-9) bounced back after a

late collapse at Cleveland a week earlier.

Chicago scored touchdowns on three straight possessions in the first half to take a 21-0 lead and held on from there.

Kyler Murray threw for 230 yards and two touchdowns for the Cardinals (3-12).

STEELERS 34, BENGALS 11

PITTSBURGH (AP)—Mason Rudolph and embattled receiver George Pickens connected for two long touchdowns, and the Pittsburgh Steelers kept their fading playoff hopes alive, beating the Cincinnati Bengals 34-11 on Saturday.

Rudolph, making his first start in two years in place of the injured Kenny Pickett and the ineffective Mitch Trubisky, hit Pickens for an 86-yard catch-and-run score on Pittsburgh's second offensive snap. He found a streaking Pickens with a 66-yard rainbow in the third quarter as the Steelers (8-7) snapped a three-game skid.

Pickens caught four passes for 195 yards. Rudolph finished 17 of 27 for 290 yards as the Steelers put together their best offensive performance in years.

BILLS 24, CHARGERS 22

INGLEWOOD, Calif. (AP)—Josh Allen accounted for three touchdowns, Tyler Bass made a 29-yard field goal with 28 seconds remaining, and Buffalo beat Los Angeles to improve its playoff chances.

Allen ran for two TDs and threw for one, becoming the first player in NFL history with four consecutive seasons of 40 combined touchdowns.

Bass' go-ahead kick capped a 13-play, 64-yard drive that included Allen's 15-yard completion to Khalil Shakir on third down. The Bills (9-6) have won four of their last five.

RAMS 30, SAINTS 22

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Sean McVay turned the Los Angeles Rams' already jubilant locker room into a party Thursday night with an announcement: The players are off until Tuesday, allowing them to spend the entire Christmas holiday with their families.

These surprising Rams earned their holiday with a surge of five wins in six games down the stretch, culminating in another impressive victory over a fellow NFC playoff contender.

Matthew Stafford passed for 328 yards and two touchdowns, rookie Puka Nacua had nine catches for a career-high 164 yards and a score, and the Rams surged forward in the race for a postseason berth with a 30-22 victory over the New Orleans Saints.

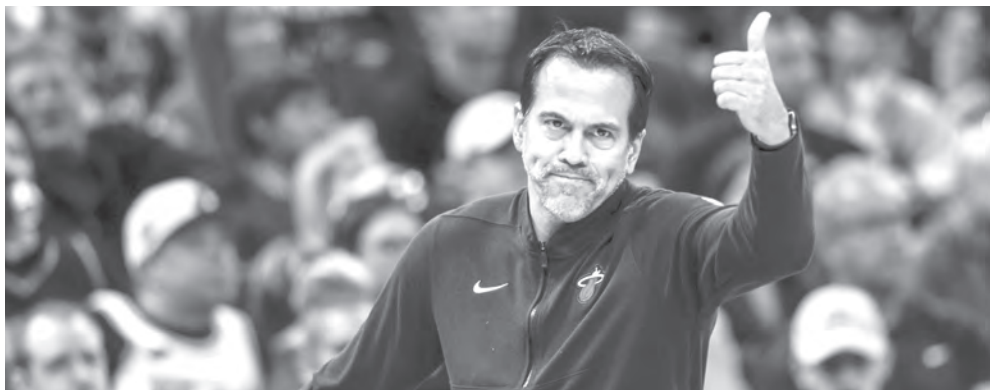
NBA's annual Christmas slate awaits; teams insist it's special to be picked



MIAMI (AP)—Erik Spoelstra was part of 12 Christmas games as a staff member, assistant coach or head coach in his first 20 seasons with the Miami Heat.

And in the eight seasons that followed, the Heat played on Christmas only once.

Here's what he realized: For an NBA team, playing on Christmas beats not playing on Christmas. The Heat return to the league's holiday slate for the first time since 2020 on Monday, when they play host to the Philadelphia 76ers as part of the



Miami Heat head coach Erik Spoelstra reacts as his team plays the Orlando Magic during the first half of an NBA basketball game, Wednesday, Dec. 20, 2023, in Orlando, Fla.

NBA's traditional Christmas quintuple header.

The other games: Milwaukee at New York, Golden State vis-

its defending champion Denver, Boston visits the Los Angeles Lakers in the rekindling of the NBA's greatest all-time rivalry

and Dallas goes to Phoenix.

"It is an honor to have that opportunity to play on Christmas," Spoelstra said. "The

whole league doesn't play on the holiday and there were several years in a row where we were never even considered for playing on Christmas. And then you go back, you almost took it for granted that we were always playing on Christmas."

Other teams also insist they don't take it for granted.

Golden State playing on Christmas has become a holiday tradition; the Warriors are on the Dec. 25 schedule for the 13th time in the last 14 years. And Warriors guard Stephen Curry still gets excited about what awaits.

"Marquee games on Christmas, it's going to be a great atmosphere," Curry said. "You know, we've been in that environment before, so I understand what it's going to be like. On the road, it's going to be fun to just compete. It's a test."

The Christmas slate was long considered the unofficial point in the NBA schedule where more fans start paying attention. Football is winding

down, and the NBA games are all shown nationally either on ABC or ESPN.

LeBron James will pay attention, too—but not until certain other Christmas business is complete. The NBA's all-time leading scorer has played more games on Dec. 25 than anyone in league history, though his top priority entering the holiday is watching 9-year-old daughter Zhuri light up when she rips the wrapping paper off what's coming her way.

"The only thing I care about Monday right now is my daughter waking up and opening her gifts," James said Saturday after he and the Los Angeles Lakers beat Oklahoma City.

The Heat planned a short practice for Christmas Eve morning. They were getting most of Sunday off, along with Christmas morning. Players aren't due at the arena until Monday afternoon for the game, with Spoelstra trying to make sure everyone gets time to celebrate as they wish.

Embiid won't play in 76ers-Heat Christmas game because of ankle issue

MIAMI (AP)—Reigning NBA MVP Joel Embiid will not play in Philadelphia's Christmas night game against the Miami Heat, with the 76ers ruling him out because of a sprained right ankle.

Embiid did not fly with the Sixers on Sunday to Miami. He got hurt during Friday's win over Toronto.

It'll be the fourth game Embiid has missed this season for the 76ers, who are third in the

Eastern Conference and fourth overall in the NBA, entering Monday with a 20-8 record. He has been on a tear in December, averaging 40.2 points and 12.6 rebounds on 61% shooting in nine appearances so far this month.

For the season, Embiid is averaging a league-best 35 points per game—on pace right now to win his third consecutive scoring title. He's had at least 30 points and 10 rebounds in each

of his last 13 games, the NBA's longest such streak since 1972 when Kareem Abdul-Jabbar did it in 16 straight contests.

Embiid played most of Friday's game against the Raptors after hurting the ankle while trying to block a shot midway through the first quarter. He was scoreless at that point, had 11 points by halftime and scored 20 more in the second half.

The team evaluated Em-

biid's status over the weekend and determined that him playing Monday wouldn't be wise. It's possible he could rejoin the team for its game Wednesday at Orlando.

The Heat may be without Jimmy Butler on Monday. Butler has missed Miami's last two games with a calf strain and did not practice Sunday, though he was listed as questionable for the nationally televised matchup against the 76ers.

AGAPE

From page 20

The team said their training area is two portions of the course, so they are pretty familiar with. They added they



LEIGH GASES

Second place in the open division, Run Saipan Alpha team takes a jumping pose photo after the Northern Marianas Athletics' 42nd Christmas Island Relay last Saturday at the Hyatt Regency Saipan.

like the new course more than the old one because it's an out-and-back course and that it doesn't go through many residential areas or buildings along Beach Road.

Team captain Wang said

he had the most tired legs of the race because he ran three times—from the U.S. Army Reserve to the turning point and back to the finish/start line with his team.

Zhu then said, "we're thankful for the race... we're always very thankful for our competitors and for the opportunity to compete. We also thank our God for helping us and giving us strength. And also, our pastor Kok H. Pang. He's not present today because he's in Fiji. He'll be back a week from now."

NMA president Ray Tebuteb said after the awards ceremony, "This is the oldest running event in the CNMI. This event is probably older than half of the participants. Our partners and sponsors

are important in having these wellness activities in our community, as well as you, [Saipan Tribune and Marianas Variety] are also very critical because you disseminate this to the community."

He then wished everyone a "very safe and prosperous new year, and Merry Christmas!"

The sponsors of this year's race were Coca-Cola Beverage Co. (Micronesia), Inc., TSL Foundation, Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan, McDonald's, IT&E, Northern Marianas Sports Association, Run Saipan, Department of Public Safety, and Marianas High School National Honor Society.

Results of the youth division will be posted in the next issues of *Saipan Tribune*.

TEAM

From page 20

opportunities. They could not get past them and only scored five points as Team Nesian Built ended the game early with their 21st point at 3:30 left on the clock.

With that, Santos scored 8 points, Basa put up 6, Lizama scored 5, while Schmidt scored 1. For Net Rippers, Sablan scored 3 points, while Aranda and Camacho had 1 marker each.

Schmidt was interviewed after the game and said they felt "good" defending their title. He said the team has

been "preparing, working out, and getting in condition," and their finals game highlighted their strategy of "defense and all out shooting."

Throughout the tourney that began last Thursday, Team Nesian Built won all five of their games, just as they did in the November series. It is looking like they are the team to beat and Schmidt said their goal is to be the 3x3 team chosen to represent NMI in the FIBA Asia 3x3 Cup in Singapore next year.

Results of the women's 3x3 championship will be posted in the next issues of *Saipan Tribune*.



LEIGH GASES

From left, Team Nesian Built's Preston Basa, Douglas Schmidt, Jack Lizama defended their title in the December championship of the NMIBF Marianas Arsenal 3x3 Basketball Series 2K23 last Saturday at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

For more information on the NMIBF Marianas Arsenal 3x3 Basketball Series 2K23, call (670) 287-3103 or email nmibasketballfederation@gmail.com.

ELLIOTT

From page 20

academics as well as in tennis. My priority is to improve so that when I come back to Saipan, I will be able to play my best in off-island tournaments and represent the CNMI well."

Elliott said she had to do a bit of adjusting coming from a tropical island in the middle of the Pacific Ocean.

"The first semester was hard and fun at the same time. Academic-wise it was easy since the classes were very similar too my high school classes. The hard part was finding my group of people...The biggest adjustment was definitely the weather. But being independent and away from my parent in a new environment has been challenging."

And as the holidays roll along, she can't help but pine more for home.

"What I miss most about home are definitely my friends and family. I also miss is the diversity in food since the location of my college there isn't much variety."

Elliott, who is on island for the Christmas break, then thanked her loved ones for supporting her through and through in her sports

and academic journey.

"I really want to thank my parents because without them I would not be playing tennis or have the opportunity to go to college in the United States. They continue to support me in every way which I appreciate so much."

Adrian College women's tennis team coach Kyle Haines only had nice things to say about her top tennis player.

"The thing that impressed me the most about her is her composure and the way she is able to handle herself in high pressure situations. Her strong points as a tennis player are her point construction and the fight she offers to stay in every single point until the last shot. We're lucky to have her!"

When asked what Elliott needs to improve on, Haines said, "One thing I think she could work on is her shot selection and choosing the appropriate shot at the right time. Most of the time she does but I think it could be fine-tuned even more."

The Adrian College Bulldogs' women's tennis team finished 5-4 last fall season, but will play another 15 matches this spring season in the Michigan Inter-Collegiate Athletic Association of Division III of the NCAA.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Hye Jin Elliott makes it three netters from the CNMI playing No. 1 for their respective schools in the NCAA.

42nd Christmas Island Relay



Team Saipan Swim Club poses for a photo at the finish line of the Northern Marianas Athletics' 42nd Christmas Island Relay last Saturday at the Hyatt Regency Saipan.



A team poses for a photo at the finish line of the Northern Marianas Athletics' 42nd Christmas Island Relay last Saturday at the Hyatt Regency Saipan.



Team #elfies poses for a photo at the finish line of the Northern Marianas Athletics' 42nd Christmas Island Relay last Saturday at the Hyatt Regency Saipan.



This team consisting of Run Saipan members in their Run Saipan Holiday Half Marathon shirts poses for a photo after the Northern Marianas Athletics' 42nd Christmas Island Relay last Saturday at the Hyatt Regency Saipan.



Team Yard of Beef poses for a photo at the finish line of the Northern Marianas Athletics' 42nd Christmas Island Relay last Saturday at the Hyatt Regency Saipan.



Team Snow It All and License to Chill pose for a group photo at the finish line of the Northern Marianas Athletics' 42nd Christmas Island Relay last Saturday at the Hyatt Regency Saipan.



Team Normal Korean Boys poses for a photo at the finish line of the Northern Marianas Athletics' 42nd Christmas Island Relay last Saturday at the Hyatt Regency Saipan.



Team Taflinger crosses the finish line of the Northern Marianas Athletics' 42nd Christmas Island Relay last Saturday at the Hyatt Regency Saipan.



Third place in the open division, Team Dolphin, races hand in hand to the finish line at the Hyatt Regency Saipan during the Northern Marianas Athletics' 42nd Christmas Island Relay last Saturday.

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<p>\$14.95 /week</p> <p>JBL Encore Light-Up Speaker</p>	<p>\$15.95 /week</p> <p>JBL Party Box 110 Light-Up Speaker</p>	<p>\$16.95 /week</p> <p>Oculus Quest 2 VR Set, 128GB</p>	<p>\$24.95 /week</p> <p>XBOX X, 1TB</p>
<p>\$14.95 /week</p> <p>Handmade Acoustic Guitar Bundle</p>	<p>\$26.95 /week</p> <p>Victus 15.6", 8GB Gaming Laptop</p>	<p>\$24.95 /week</p> <p>Macbook Air</p>	<p>\$19.95 /week</p> <p>iMac 21.5"</p>
<p>\$15.95 /week</p> <p>Samsung Galaxy Tab A8</p>	<p>\$14.95 /week</p> <p>iPad Mini 4th Gen</p>	<p>\$15.95 /week</p> <p>iPad 9th Gen</p>	<p>\$19.95 /week</p> <p>Nintendo Switch OLED</p>

*This is a rent to own transaction. You don't own the product until all rental payments are completed. Example: \$9.95/wk x 12 months=\$517.40. Items may differ. Some restrictions apply, see store for details.



NO CREDIT CHECKS

Middle Road 234-RENT | Chalan Kanoa 234-DIAL





Dolphins' last-second field goal win over Cowboys gives them playoff berth.

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Saipan Tribune Sports

NBA's annual Christmas slate awaits; teams insist it's special to be picked.

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SAIPAN TRIBUNE

CHRISTMAS ISLAND RELAY

Agape Team 1 'sleighs' with new course record



LEIGH GASES

By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER

First place Agape Team 1, middle in red; second place Run Saipan Alpha, left in green; and Team Dolphin, right in blue, pose for a group photo after the awards ceremony of Northern Marianas Athletics' 42nd Christmas Island Relay last Saturday at the Hyatt Regency Saipan.

Agape Team 1 "sleighed" the new Northern Marianas Athletics' 42nd Christmas Island Relay 13.1-mile course from Hyatt Regency Saipan to Marpi and back last Saturday.



Student-athletes from Agape Christian School—Samuel Zhu, Jireh Wang, Raffy Cai, Caleb Cui, and James Fan ran—or flew—like Santa's reindeers to an early Christmas gift of first place with a time of 1:11.14, smashing the old record of 1:19.52 set by

Run Saipan Alpha last year. A close second was Run Saipan Alpha with captain Tania Tan in a time of 1:13.93, and third place went to Team Dolphin captained by Pony Tang.

After the race, the Agape Team was interviewed and said they were "very grateful" for their win and that it was a "challenging and interesting race."



LEIGH GASES

Agape Team 1 celebrates as they cross the finish line at the Hyatt Regency Saipan of the 13.1-mile course in the Northern Marianas Athletics' 42nd Annual Christmas Island Relay last Saturday morning.

During the interview, they were told that they broke and set a new course record, much to the delight of the team.

They said it was "exciting" news because their goal was to actually break the record.

See AGAPE on Page 17

Elliott to play No. 1 for Adrian College

By MARK RABAGO
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EDITOR



Following the footsteps of Carol Lee and Asia Raulerson—Saipan netters playing No. 1 for their schools in the NCAA—is Hye Jin Elliott.

The Saipan International School alumnae is leading the NCAA Division III Adrian College women's tennis varsity team this season.

"I was pretty excited that I made it on the team. While



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Saipan's Hye Jin Elliott in action for Adrian College, an NCAA Division III school.

Division III schools don't give out athletic scholarships, Adrian College gave me a significant amount of financial aid because

of my academics," said the 18-year-old former CNMI junior netter.

The criminal justice major

said she didn't really thought about continuing her tennis career until Adrian College reached out to her.

"The past tennis coach and the captain of the women's team of Adrian College contacted me and told me about the school. So, the process to get to know Adrian college and get recruited came easy to me."

Now that she's on the school's varsity team, the former Grace Christian Academy volleyball center said she will definitely try to be the best version of herself in the sport while not neglecting her studies.

"My goal is to excel in my See ELLIOTT on Page 17

Team Nesian Built defends 3x3 title

By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER

Team Nesian Built successfully defended their title in the NMIBF Marianas Arsenal 3x3 Basketball Series 2K23 last Saturday at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

Coby Santos, Douglas Schmidt, Preston Basa, and Jack Lizama overpowered Net Rippers' Jack Aranda, Greg Sablan, Juan Camacho, and Jeffrey Castro, 21-5, in the fast-paced championship game.

Third place went to Hagu Real Hoops' Chioni Dela Cruz, Eli Aughenbaugh, Joseph Sablan, and Shane

Deleon Guerrero, who won over Team Priority Care' Steve King, Marvin Rabauliman, Matt Duenas, and Alfred Manglona, 22-11.

Team Nesian Built used their chemistry, speed, and impenetrable defense to their advantage as they held down a worthy adversary of sharpshooters and basketball veterans. Basa covered from the far range as under the net plays and drives were led by Santos, Lizama, and Schmidt.

Their hot defense pressured the Net Rippers to take off-balanced and inaccurate shots that resulted in missed

See TEAM on Page 17



LEIGH GASES

Team Nesian Built's Coby Santos goes for a layup as he's defended by Net Rippers' Greg Sablan, left, and Juan Camacho, during their December championship game of the NMIBF Marianas Arsenal 3x3 Basketball Series 2K23 last Saturday at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.